

INDIA REPORT

MAY 2026



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ABOUT TSUSA

Global Partner Programming

The TSUSA GPP provides a foundational base from which state tourism offices have shared in-country representation with international export marketing and sales activities. Managed by Travel South USA, the official regional destination marketing organization for the 12 state tourism offices, these collaborative efforts create leveraged actions, increase reach of travel trade and journalists, and coordinated consumer campaigns which deliver visitors to the South. In 2019, the Travel South USA region welcomed 10.2 million visitors, who spent \$10.3 billion, with 90% of these visitors arriving from 15 markets from around the globe.

India, the world's fifth-largest economy, is projected to grow between 6% and 7% in FY25, reinforcing its status as one of the fastest-growing major economies. In 2024, the USA received 2.19 million visitors from India 24.3% increase over 2023, ranking India as the #2 overseas source market (excluding Canada and Mexico) and #4 overall for international arrivals. The country is now the world's third-largest aviation market, with significant airport expansions underway.

With Indian travelers typically holding a 10-year U.S. visa and a significant proportion comprising repeat visitors, the Southern states present considerable potential as destinations to explore. Through the GPP program, our focus will be on promoting the diversity and distinct character of the Southern states in the Indian market, thereby generating stronger interest and engagement among Indian travelers. The rich combination of culture, cuisine, music, and outdoor experiences offered by the region is particularly appealing to the Indian audience, making it a compelling proposition for both first-time and repeat visitors.

Indian travelers increasingly seek diverse experiences spanning sports, entertainment, cruises, wellness, and adventure tourism. Travel is now seen as a contributor to personal well-being and a way to collect unique experiences from shopping and cultural activities to culinary explorations. This shift is fueled by a young, affluent, and digitally savvy population, with millennials and Gen Z leading the way. Rising incomes and a "You Only Live Once" mindset are encouraging higher spending on premium services and exclusive travel opportunities. India's digital adoption is robust, with 806 million internet users (55.3% penetration, up 6.5% year-on-year) and stable mobile connectivity at 1.12 billion connections, covering 76.6% of the population.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Trade and media discussions for TSUSA continued despite the ongoing U.S-Iran Conflict situation with **136 trade meetings** and **69 media meetings** to date.
- TSUSA India Webinar 1 - North & East markets :
 - Achieved participation from **33 travel agents**.
 - Targeted key Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities across North and East India.
 - Session focused on destination introduction, connectivity and routing options, sample itineraries, and sales tools to help agents effectively position and sell Travel South USA.
- New product development - **DMCBazaar.com** (Hotels & activities listed for Missouri, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, North & South Carolina and ROTS)

		Q1 TOTAL	Q2 TOTAL	Jan	Feb	Mar	Q3 Total	Apr	May	FY25/26 Total
10 partners AL/AR/KY /LA/MS/ MO/NC/S C/TN/RO TS	India									
	Trade									
	Trade Meetings/Trainings	9	50	15	17	15	47	15	15	136
	Number of Agents Trained	4	51	13	42	13	68	12	23	158
	Managed Media									
	Media Meetings	10	25	6	5	8	19	7	8	69
	Total number of articles publ	14	18	5	6	9	21	6	9	68
	Impressions	4,63,50,000	25,88,67,600	1,09,97,443	28,80,000	1,07,69,000	2,46,46,443	7,37,38,000	13,64,24,000	54,00,26,043

II. Comms & PR

Meetings with media, coverage opportunities, contacts, press trips, earned media valuation, clippings, and others.

News Releases

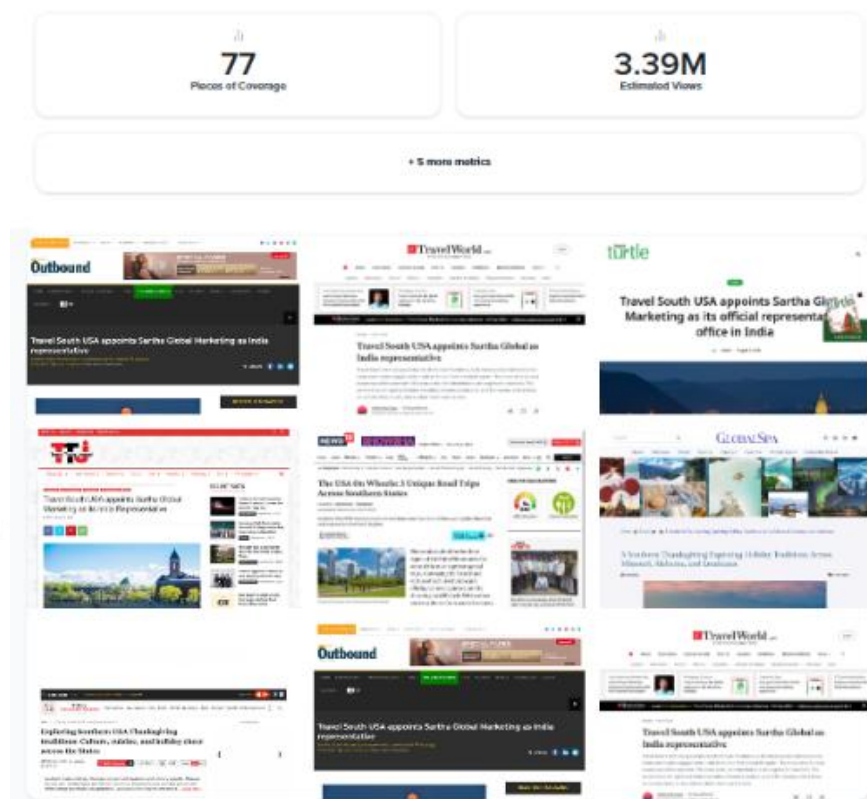
- 9 media clippings were generated in the month of May.
- 1 content piece was disseminated to the consumer media platforms on the topic “Experience America's 250th in Southern Style”.
- Additional coverage appeared from last month’s content, “Atlanta Gets Ready for 2026 FIFA World Cup: A 3-Day Itinerary for Fans and Visitors”.
- Content on MICHELIN Guide restaurants in Nashville was covered by the Times of India, India's largest daily broadsheet.

- **GMM 2026:**

Teja Lelle, Freelance Travel Writer coverage update:

- 2 media clips appeared in Mint (Print & Online) on Louisiana.
- 1 clip appeared in The Week (online), based on her trip to Mobile, Alabama.

CoverageBook Link - <https://app.coveragebook.com/29490/books/5c685b5c980151ee>



II. Comms & PR

Media Contacts(phone calls, emails, personal meetings) cont.

Contacts	Discussion points	Website
Mint (Print)	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IW--by5eVFU8rAu13GW4xJLfr0qO10XJ/view?usp=drivesdk	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Mint (Online)	Where to get your beignet fix in Louisiana	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Zee News (Marathi)	Atlanta gets ready for FIFA 2026: A 3 day itinerary for fans and visitor	https://zeenews.india.com/marathi
Times of India	US turns 250: Where to witness best celebrations across South America in 2026	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/
Times of India (Food)	Nashville's Top MICHELIN-Recognised Restaurants and why they should be on your bucket list	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/
MSN	US turns 250: Where to witness best celebrations across South America in 2026	https://www.msn.com/en-in
Daily Jagran	FIFA World Cup 2026 In Atlanta: Top 5 Things To Do Beyond The Stadium	https://www.thedailyjagran.com/
AJ Mix	US turns 250: Where to witness best celebrations across South America in 2026	https://ajmix.in/

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
Epic Global DMC	TSUSA training with 6 members with a focus on itinerary building and product development	Follow-up email with important links was sent
TripNavigator	TSUSA training with 12 members with a focus on itinerary building and product development	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Traviante	TSUSA training with 5 members with a focus on itinerary building and product development	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Veena World	Product development follow-up with expected website product visibility by mid-June	Maintain regular outreach
Miles Holidays	High-end FIT agent with steady VFR business interested to promote Louisiana and North & South Carolina. Product development discussed and assets shared	FIT Product development push
Thomas Cook	Additional product development focused meeting with info on ROTS, Arkansas and Carolina's shared for FIT Products.	Product development push
Mayur Suvidha	Mumbai based agency focused on Western India (Gujarati) vegetarian family groups and FIT. They are open for product development on their website and we have promoted TSUSA states like Louisiana as a start.	FIT Product development push
Sahajanand World Travel	Ahmedabad-based FIT & VFR focused agency with a discussion to update them on product development for TSUSA. They intend to start with Florida as a starting point and requested for itineraries around the same.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Jain & Jain Travels	Introduction to TSUSA and assistance with itinerary creation with Miami as the entry-point.	Follow-up email with important links was sent Product development to follow
DMC Bazaar	Product development update over TSUSA focused products listed on their B2B website.	Product development push

III. Trade

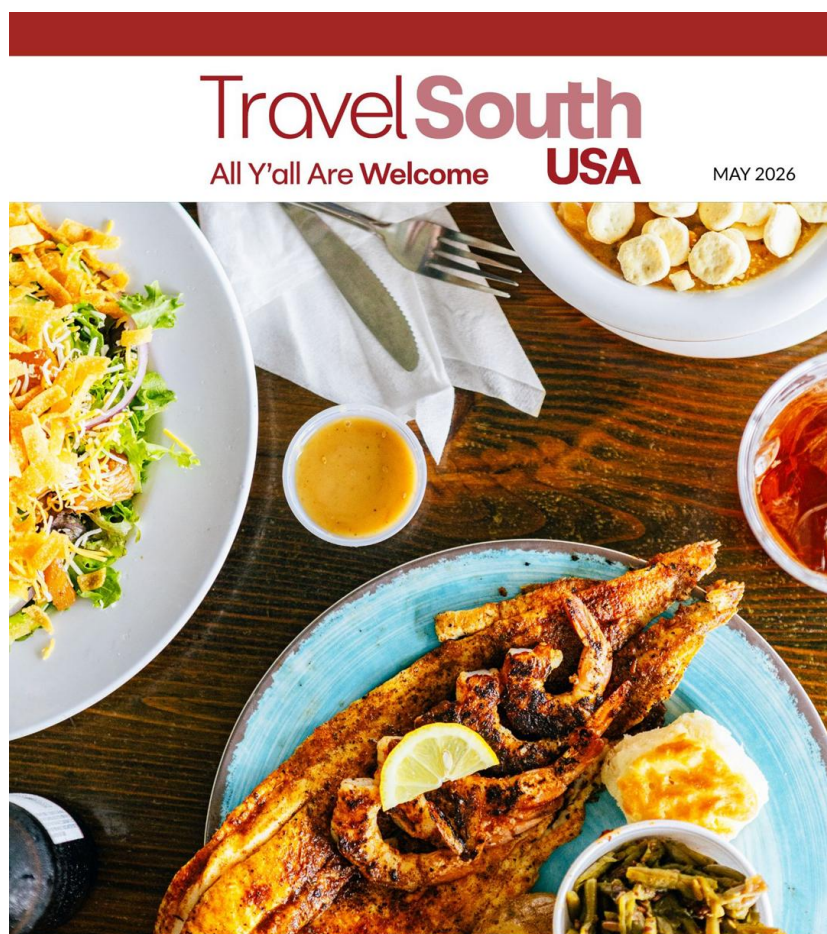
Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
SOTC	Discussion around additional product development around Route 66 and ROTS.	Follow-up email with important links was sent. Product development to follow
Nimbus Tours	They have seen steady bookings to the US and are keen on promoting new destinations. We have shared TSUSA assets with them.	Maintain regular follow-up
Cutting Edge	Discussion on the FIFA 26 performance focused on Atlanta and Kansas City. Both locations have seen positive response from their clients primarily corporates. We have shared day-trip itineraries with them.	Maintain regular follow-up
Panache World	Discussion over curating bespoke experiences for repeat travellers & VFR clients with a focus on self drives.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Dolphin Tours	Follow up over product development for the FIT segment. Expected timeline given was of early Aug for products around Louisiana, Atlanta and New Orleans.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.

IV. Newsletters

Trade Newsletter to 6000+ tour operators/ travel agent professionals and 300+ media professionals

Status	Topic	Trade Open Rate	Media Open Rate
Travel South USA Newsletter Series# 8	The Roots of Southern Food & The Bounty of the Sea: May 13, 2026	17.50%	19.70%
	Featured Louisiana, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi		



THE ROOTS OF SOUTHERN FOOD & THE BOUNTY OF THE SEA

Welcome to the American South — where rich culinary roots and the bounty of the sea come together in every experience. From legendary barbecue and comforting Southern classics to fresh Gulf seafood and coastal flavors, the region's cuisine is deeply tied to its land, waters, and traditions. Beyond the table, vibrant communities, music heritage, and local culture bring the spirit of the South to life, creating experiences that are warm, authentic, and unforgettable.

IV. Newsletters



LOUISIANA

Louisiana's fresh seafood is at the heart of its Creole and Cajun cuisine, from crawfish and shrimp to redfish and snapper. A local favorite is the Charbroiled Oyster, first created at Drago's Seafood Restaurant — grilled oysters topped with butter, garlic, herbs, and Pecorino Romano cheese. A true taste of Louisiana's rich culinary heritage.

[EXPLORE ORIGINALS](#)

ALABAMA

Alabama's cuisine is shaped by African, Indigenous, and European influences, with barbecue at the heart of its culinary traditions. Slow-smoked pulled pork, ribs, and smoked chicken are served with regional flavors, including the state's famous white sauce from North Alabama. Classic Southern desserts reflect the warmth of Alabama's food culture.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina's culinary heritage is rooted in its farms, coastlines, and iconic food traditions. As the nation's leading producer of sweet potatoes, the state blends Southern comfort food with modern creativity. It is also home to brands like PepsiCo and Krispy Kreme, alongside a seafood culture that reflect the flavors of the Atlantic.

[READ FURTHER](#)

SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina's food culture is shaped by its rich farming traditions and the bounty of the Atlantic coast. Rooted in land, water, and history, the state's cuisine blends Southern heritage with coastal flavors, creating a culinary identity that is both traditional and ever evolving. From Lowcountry seafood dishes to comforting Southern classics, every meal reflects the warmth and character of the state.

[KNOW MORE ABOUT IT](#)

MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi's culinary heritage blends soulful Southern traditions with diverse cultural influences. From fried catfish, cornbread, and Delta tamales to Jackson's famous Comeback Sauce served at The Mayflower Cafe, the state's cuisine is rich in flavor and history. Along the Gulf Coast, fresh seafood like shrimp, oysters, and crab further define Mississippi's food culture.

[EXPLORE MORE](#)

YOUR NEXT SOUTHERN ADVENTURE STARTS HERE!

FUN FACT: Alabama's famous white sauce was created in 1925 at Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q. Made with mayonnaise, vinegar, and spices, it remains one of the state's most iconic barbecue traditions.

FOR MORE UPDATES, LOCAL SECRETS, AND TRAVEL INSPIRATION, FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



V. Social Media

- Instagram generated 60 interactions and 30 profile visits, highlighting strong engagement and increased intent to explore the brand
- Instagram emerged as the stronger engagement platform, generating 250 interactions, 666 views, and 65 profile visits.
- Facebook delivered 308 views and 70 engagements, reflecting active interaction from the audience.
- Non-followers contribute meaningfully to discovery, accounting for 35% of Facebook views and 39% of Instagram interactions, indicating continued reach beyond the existing community.

VI. Market Update

Market & Economy Updates

- India's economy is projected to grow between 6.8% and 7.2% in FY 2026-27 despite global geopolitical uncertainties.
 - Growth is expected to be driven by strong domestic consumption and continued investment activity.
- A recent report by Anand Rathi Investment Banking states that India's travel and tourism sector is expected to grow at a 7% CAGR through FY35, driven by infrastructure growth, rising travel demand, and technology adoption.
 - Young travelers continue to fuel demand, spending a significant share of their income on travel.
 - Report also highlights strong long-term growth in global tourism, supported by expanding middle-class incomes and the growing adoption of AI-powered booking platforms.
- According to the Allianz Partners Global Travel Confidence Index 2026, travel remains a top priority for Indian consumers, with 87% planning a summer trip—well above the global average of 74%.
 - Indian travelers are increasingly seeking experience-led journeys, including cultural, wellness, cruise, and sports tourism.
 - AI is becoming a key travel planning tool, with 82% using AI-powered platforms for trip research and bookings.
 - B-leisure travel is on the rise, with over 70% interested in combining business and leisure travel.

Travel Trade Updates

- Thomas Cook (India) and Atlys, a digital visa processing platform, have partnered to offer visa processing and foreign exchange services on a single platform.
- MakeMyTrip, India's leading OTA platform, has upgraded its AI travel assistant, Myra, into a conversational booking platform that can help users search, plan, and book trips, including payments, all within a single chat.

NTO Updates

- Visit California and Brand USA collaborated with the NBA India for the BUDX NBA House event held in New Delhi on May 8–9, 2026.
- The Sacramento Kings visited India as a part of the BUDX NBA House event.
 - In partnership with Visit California, the Sacramento Kings engaged with Indian audiences through a series of youth-focused community initiatives and a VIP networking dinner hosted in partnership with Adobe.

VI. Market Update

Airline Updates

- Air India updates
 - Air India has announced the opening of its newest signature premium lounge, The Maharaja Lounge, at San Francisco International Airport, further strengthening the airline's premium international customer experience offering. The lounge officially welcomed guests on May 23, 2026.
 - Due to rising fuel costs and ongoing airspace restrictions, the airline has temporarily reduced and suspended select flight operations.
 - Flight schedule updates:
 - **Delhi–Chicago**: Temporarily suspended.
 - **Delhi–San Francisco**: Reduced from 10 weekly flights to daily (7x weekly) through August.
 - **Delhi–Toronto**: Reduced from 10 weekly flights to 5x weekly through July; scheduled to return to daily service from August.
 - **Delhi–Vancouver**: Reduced from daily service to 5x weekly.
 - **Mumbai–Newark**: Increased from 3x weekly to daily service (7x weekly).
 - **Delhi–New York (JFK)**: Continues to operate daily (7x weekly).
 - **Delhi–Newark** and **Mumbai–New York (JFK)**: Temporarily suspended.
- Swiss International Airlines has announced a new nonstop service between Bengaluru and Zurich, launching in October 2026 with five weekly flights.
 - The route will provide convenient access to SWISS Zurich hub, with onward connections across Europe and North America through the Lufthansa Group and Star Alliance network.
 - Key North American connections include Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, New York (JFK & Newark), Miami, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

VI. Market Update

Media Updates

- India's connected TV audience has reached 96 million, just behind the US at 241 million, making it one of the largest CTV markets among the countries tracked by Comscore, a global media measurement and analytics company. [Read more](#)
 - India now has a larger CTV audience than Brazil (91 million), Germany (51 million), Mexico (47 million), the UK (44 million), France and Argentina (32 million each), Spain (30 million), Indonesia and Canada (26 million each), Italy (13 million), and Malaysia (11 million).
 - India's connected TV audience grew by nearly 24 million users between May 2025 and May 2026. If the current 34% annual growth rate continues, the country's CTV user base could reach nearly 129 million by May 2027.
- According to the latest South Asia OTT market projections by Muvi, a new market report covering India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka for the period 2026–2030, the region's streaming revenue (excluding India) is expected to grow from \$4.96 billion in 2026 to \$6.76 billion by 2030. India alone is projected to scale from \$13 billion to \$23.9 billion over the same period. [Read more](#)
- India's microdrama segment is rapidly emerging as a major force in premium advertising. The Lumikai State of India Interactive Media Report 2025 estimates that the market crossed \$300 million in its first year of meaningful scale, has already generated 450 million downloads, and has reached 100 million monthly active users (MAUs) in the country. [Read more](#)
 - According to industry executives, microdrama content is achieving nearly 75% view-through rates, about 15–20% higher than conventional short-form video formats, making the segment increasingly profitable for advertisers and positioning it as an important benchmark for premium advertising in India.
- The Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Rules, 2026 took effect on May 1, establishing a formal regulatory framework for India's online gaming sector. [Read more](#)
 - The framework introduces a system to distinguish between online money games, which are prohibited, and permissible categories such as e-sports and online social games, as well as the establishment of the Online Gaming Authority of India, a central regulatory body tasked with classification, registration and grievance redressal.
- Bidding for the FIFA World Cup 2026 media rights in India is nearing its final stages, though FIFA has yet to officially confirm a broadcast partner. Zee Entertainment Enterprises has emerged as the frontrunner for the television and digital rights, with further clarity and formal confirmation expected soon. [Read more](#)

VII. Actions

1. Travel South USA India Webinar 2

- TSUSA webinar 2 for West & South Indian markets will be held on 10 June targeting 30 attendees by leveraging the Sartha Global database and Zoom platform.

2. Newsletter

- June Edition - It's a June Potluck: Anything Goes!
- Focus states – Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, ROTS

3. Social Media

Content Mix Optimization:

- 50% Inspiration (destinations, experiences)
- 40% Value-led (itineraries, tips, seasonal hooks)
- 10% Social proof (UGC, testimonials, creator content)
- Increase the share of Reels and video-first content to drive broader reach and attract new audiences.
- Introduce more interactive content formats such as quizzes, polls, and destination challenges to encourage participation.
- Continue showcasing a diverse mix of destinations and experiences to maintain audience interest and content freshness.
- Strengthen calls-to-action within posts to convert profile visitors into followers and repeat engagers.
- Amplify top-performing content through targeted boosts to expand reach among relevant travel audiences.