

INDIA REPORT

JUNE 2026

Travel
South
USA

Prepared By:



M6, First Floor, Sri Aurobindo Marg,
Block M, Kharera, Hauz Khas, New Delhi,
Delhi 110016

P +11 98899-1551

W <https://sarthaglobal.com/>

SUNIL PURI, *Managing Director*

spuri@sarthaglobal.com

Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary

II. Communication & PR

III. Travel Trade

IV. Monthly Newsletter

V. Digital & Social consumer outreach

VI. Market Updates

VII. Action Items

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 with **152 trade meetings** and **75 media meetings** from September 2025 till June 2026
- TSUSA India Webinar 2 - South & West markets :
 - Achieved participation from **49 travel agents**.
 - Targeted key Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities across South and West 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.
 - Sent TSUSA backpacks to 5 Quiz winners
- Organic social media promotion on Travel Twist Instagram page (259 followers) and reshared by Mr. Harji Singh (1800 followers) (MD, Travel Twist)



		Q1 TOTAL	Q2 TOTAL	Feb	Mar	Q3 Total	Apr	May	June	FY25/26 Total
10 partners AL/AR/KY /LA/MS/ MO/NC/S C/TN/RO TS	India									
	Trade									
	Trade Meetings/Trainings	9	50	17	15	47	15	15	16	152
	Number of Agents Trained	4	51	42	13	68	12	23	57	248
	Managed Media									
	Media Meetings	10	25	5	8	19	7	8	6	75
	Total number of articles publ	14	18	6	9	21	6	9	10	78
	Impressions	4,63,50,000	25,88,67,600	28,80,000	1,07,69,000	2,46,46,443	7,37,38,000	13,64,24,000	7,00,64,443	61,01,51,486

II. Comms & PR

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

News Releases

- 10 media clippings were generated in the month of June
- 1 content piece was disseminated to the consumer media platforms on the topic “Rekindle Your Inner Senses at these North Carolina Yoga Retreats”
- Additional coverage appeared from last month’s content, “America turns 250: A Southern tour of Independence Day festivities”

- **GMM 2026:**

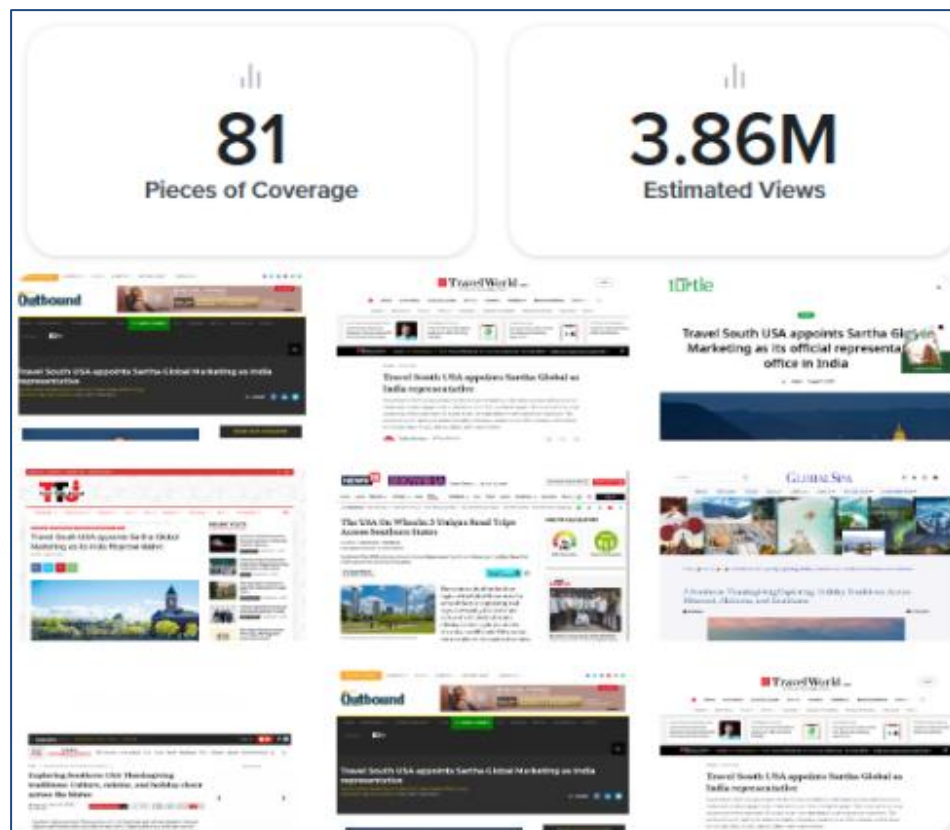
Teja Lele, Freelance Writer

- 2 media clips appeared in Mint (Print & Online) in June, highlighting South American cuisine.
- 1 clip appeared in BW Travel (online), focusing on Louisiana's Northshore

Namita Gupta- Editor in Chief, Provoke Lifestyle

- 2 media clips appeared in Provoke Lifestyle Magazine (Print & Online) covering Williamsburg, Virginia

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)	Shrimp & Grits in Alabama	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Mint (Online)	10 Alabama dishes that define the slow comfort of southern American cuisine	https://www.livemint.com/mint-lounge
Provoke Lifestyle (Print)	250 years On. Williamsburg Still Speaks	https://provokelifestyle.in/
Provoke Lifestyle (Online)	US turns 250: Where to witness best celebrations across South America in 2026	https://provokelifestyle.in/
BW Travel	Beyond New Orleans: Discovering Louisiana's Laidback Northshore	https://www.bwtravel.com/
MSN	Spending International Yoga Day in the US? Check out these yoga retreats in North Carolina	https://www.msn.com/en-in
Mid-day	Spending International Yoga Day in the US? Check out these yoga retreats in North Carolina	https://www.mid-day.com/
t2Online (Telegraph)	America turns 250: A Southern tour of Independence Day festivities	https://t2online.in/
Manorama Online	Yoga centers in North Carolina to refresh the mind and body	https://www.manoramaonline.com/
Nt Media	North Carolina Highlights Yoga Retreats and Wellness Experiences Ahead of International Yoga Day	https://ntmedia.in/

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
Gem Travels	Discussion with focus on itinerary building and product development. Training to take place in first week of July	Follow-up email with important links was sent
All 4 Season Holidays	FIT focused agency looking to promote TSUSA to their VFR and HNI clientele/repeat travellers	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Jay Tours & Travels	Training conducted with 3 participants and we proposed the development of TSUSA focused itineraries for their FIT clients.	Follow-up email with important links was sent
Veena World	Product development follow-up with expected website product visibility by mid-July	Maintain regular outreach
SOTC	Product development discussion on FIT as GIT product already listed on their website.	FIT Product development push
Thomas Cook	Product development discussion on FIT as GIT product already listed on their website.	FIT Product development push
Nivalink	Discussion on new product development and focus on states like Alabama, Missouri and Kentucky	FIT Product development push
Sahajanand World Travel	Ahmedabad-based FIT & VFR focused agency with a discussion to update them on product development for TSUSA.	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Riya Holidays	Follow up over product development. FIT focused products to be listed on their website.	Follow-up email with important links was sent Product development to follow
Indiana Travel Services	TSUSA Training request for July focused on FIT product development	Product development push

III. Trade

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Activity/Activation	Follow-up/ Next step
Travel Twist	Discussion over Social media promotion on their Instagram page. TSUSA reel shared as a part of organic social media promotion	TSUSA official video and image assets shared
Thrillophilia	OTA focused on experiences and discussion carried out around TSUSA products and training request	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
Akbar Travels	Mumbai-based B2B agency. Discussions around a training in July with a focus on product development	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Harmony Tours	Follow up over product development for the FIT segment and shared itinerary links for TSUSA	Follow-up email with important links was sent.
Flamingo TransWorld	Discussion on the upcoming TSUSA Int. showcase along with training opportunity for July	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	Explore the Soul of the South: June 10, 2026	18.60%	19.80%
	Featured Kentucky, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee and Rhythms of the South		



EXPLORE THE SOUL OF THE SOUTH

Welcome to the American South — a region where rich traditions, vibrant culture, and unforgettable experiences come together. From Kentucky's iconic horse country and Arkansas' restorative spa retreats to Missouri's underground wonders and Tennessee's blooming gardens and musical heritage, the South offers something for every traveler. Discover scenic landscapes, world-class festivals, legendary music, outdoor adventures, and warm Southern hospitality that create journeys as diverse as they are memorable.

IV. Newsletters



ARKANSAS

Known as America's Original Spa City, Hot Springs National Park is renowned for its natural thermal waters and historic Bathhouse Row, where visitors can enjoy spa treatments and wellness experiences. Beyond the baths, guests can relax at Astral Spa, hike scenic trails, or explore Garvan Woodland Gardens for a blend of relaxation and nature.

[EXPLORE MORE](#)

MISSOURI

With more than 7,500 caves, Missouri is known as the "Cave State," offering year-round underground adventures. Visitors can explore iconic attractions such as Meramec Caverns, Fantastic Caverns, and Mark Twain Cave, known for their stunning formations, rich history, and unique experiences ranging from walking tours to America's only ride-through cave.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

TENNESSEE

Tennessee's gardens and wildflower trails offer beautiful experiences across the state. Highlights include Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, Memphis Botanic Garden, and Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum, along with wildflower destinations such as Roan Highlands and Short Springs Natural Area. Visitors can enjoy blooms, trails, and local history.

[READ FURTHER](#)

KENTUCKY

Kentucky's deep-rooted horse culture comes alive through iconic experiences such as the Kentucky Derby, Churchill Downs, Keeneland, and the Kentucky Horse Park. Visitors can tour horse farms, enjoy horseback riding, watch world-class racing, and discover why Kentucky is renowned as the Horse Capital of the World.

[KNOW MORE ABOUT IT](#)

RHYTHMS OF THE SOUTH

Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans each offer distinct summer experiences. Atlanta buzzes with FIFA World Cup excitement, outdoor festivals, and neighborhoods along the BeltLine. Nashville combines live music, outdoor adventures, and Southern cuisine, while New Orleans delights visitors with iconic food, jazz festivals, and historic neighborhoods.

[EXPLORE MORE](#)

YOUR NEXT SOUTHERN ADVENTURE STARTS HERE!

FUN FACT: Astral Spa in Hot Springs was ranked among the Top 10 Spas in America for 2025, while Arkansas was named one of Condé Nast Traveler's best places to visit in North America for 2026.

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



V. Social Media

- A combined organic and paid strategy drove strong audience engagement, generating **3.6K+ organic interactions alongside 112.7K+ paid post engagements**.
- Paid promotion delivered exceptional scale, generating **9.1M+ impressions and 9.2M+ views**, making June the strongest awareness month of the year.
- Instagram led campaign performance, contributing **8.8M+ impressions, 9M+ views, and 1,101 profile visits**, establishing it as the primary platform for destination discovery.
- Generated **1,743 clicks and contributing to 201 new Instagram followers** during the campaign.
- Western, and southern Indian regional belt, and some Northern regions emerged as the strongest-performing markets, validating the campaign's audience targeting.
- A media investment of ~\$300 proved highly effective, demonstrating that strategic paid amplification can significantly accelerate awareness, engagement, and community growth while providing a strong case for future investment.

VI. Market Update

Market & Economy Updates

- In May 2026, India ranked as the #2 overseas source market for the USA with 242,630 arrivals (Source: NTT), contributing to 768,940 arrivals year-to-date (Jan–May 2026). YTD, with a resilient recovery trajectory, rebounding steadily after the temporary slowdown in February–March caused by geopolitical and airline disruptions.
- Indian Filmstar Shah Rukh Khan has unveiled the Knight Riders Cricket Ground in Los Angeles, a major investment in cricket's growing footprint in the United States. With cricket returning to the Olympic Games at LA28 for the first time since 1900, the ground is strategically positioned to support the sport's expansion and serve as a key hub in the lead-up to the Los Angeles Olympics.
- Experiential spending in India to grow at 10.3% CAGR through 2030, with hotel accommodation being the fastest-growing category at 10.6% outpacing physical goods (9.1%) as per a recent report by CBRE.
- IMF raised India's FY26 GDP growth forecast by 0.7 percentage points to 7.3%, citing strong momentum.
 - o On a calendar-year basis, IMF projects growth of 6.3% in 2026 and 6.5% in 2027.
- India is now the world's third-largest economy by purchasing power parity (a comparative value of Rupees' buying power vis-à-vis the US Dollar) as of April 2026.

Travel Trade Updates

- U.S. visa demand remains strong across India, with visitor visa appointment wait times currently standing at approximately 9.5 months in Mumbai and Hyderabad, 7.5 months in Delhi, 5.5 months in Chennai, and 4 months in Kolkata.
- The U.S. State Department is considering a pilot premium visa service that would allow business and tourist visa applicants to expedite their interview appointments by paying an additional \$750 fee on top of the standard \$185 visa application fee. Eligible applicants could register and secure a visa interview appointment at select U.S. embassies and consulates within 10 days, significantly reducing current wait times.
- Travel sentiment continues to remain positive in market with a strong demand for outbound travel, rising spending on experiences and repeat travel to the USA. USA continues to be the most aspirational long-haul destination. There have been several high-value last minute bookings for experiencing the FIFA excitement due to FOMO caused by social media.

NTO Updates

- Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) conducted a trade and media mission in Mumbai and Delhi with three partners. India is now Virginia State's #1 inbound market.

VI. Market Update

Airline Updates

- EVA Air plans to launch direct flights from Taipei to Delhi by the end of 2026. The new route aims to improve transit travel via Taipei, offering smoother connections between India and North America. The airline aims to compete with Cathay Pacific and Singapore Airlines in the North America-South Asia transit market. The airline already operates one of the strongest North American networks among Taiwanese carriers, serving 10 destinations, including Houston, Dallas, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, Toronto, and Washington, with 98 weekly round-trip flights.
- Air India announced major temporary network rationalization between June and August 2026 due to airspace restrictions and record-high aviation turbine fuel costs.
 - Delhi–Chicago route: Temporarily Suspended.
 - Delhi–San Francisco: Reduced from 10 weekly to 7 weekly flights.
 - Delhi–Newark and Mumbai–New York (JFK): Temporarily Suspended.
 - Delhi–New York (JFK): Continues operating daily.
 - Mumbai–Newark: Increased service from 3 weekly to daily (offsetting the JFK suspension).
- With the reduction in the international cost of aviation fuel and the cessation of the Iran conflict, Air India is hoping to restart these flights, including the Delhi-Dulles flight, by Q3 of this year.
- Qatar Airways is restarting its daily non-stop service to Philadelphia from August 1, 2026, from its hub, Doha. This reinstated service expands the airline's North America network to 14 destinations.

Media Updates

- India's digital footprint continues to grow, with total internet subscribers in the country reaching a massive 1.09 billion at the end of March 2026, according to the latest report released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). [More](#)
 - This marks a significant 6.24% increase from the 1.03 billion subscribers recorded in December 2025, underscoring rapidly expanding connectivity across both urban and rural regions.
- Asian media company BurdaLuxury, the publisher of Travel+Leisure India, announced its official corporate rebranding to APX Luxury following its acquisition by the venture capital and investment platform Jaipur Capital earlier this year, marking a strategic shift toward digital growth and regional expansion across Asia and the Middle East. [More](#)
 - With 46% of revenue now coming from digital and video and 330% year-over-year social growth, APX Luxury plans to further scale its digital infrastructure to support continued expansion.
 - The company will retain its existing portfolio of luxury media brands, supported by strong digital momentum.
- India's video gaming industry has reached a significant milestone, with market revenue surpassing the \$1 billion mark for the first time in 2025, according to the latest market forecasts from Niko Partners. [More](#)
 - India generated \$1.04 billion in gaming revenue in 2025, representing a robust 14.8% year-over-year growth. It is projected to become the fastest-growing gaming market across Asia and the Middle East over the next five years.

VI. Market Update

- o India's gaming audience has also reached unprecedented scale, with 511 million gamers in 2025, and is expected to grow to over 550 million in 2026 and to nearly 707 million by 2030, making it one of the largest gaming populations globally.
- Speaking at APOS 2026, the Asia-Pacific media, technology and entertainment summit, Gunjan Soni, Country Managing Director at YouTube India, stated that YouTube has become India's "prime-time screen," driven by rapid growth in Connected TV (CTV). [More](#)
 - o According to the company, Connected TV is YouTube's fastest-growing screen in India, reaching over 75 million adults aged 18 and above.
 - o Comscore data from May 2025 also suggests YouTube has the highest reach among media properties on CTV screens in the country.
- According to AppsFlyer's State of Subscriptions for Marketers 2026 report, the Indian Subcontinent has emerged as the largest contributor to global paid app growth, driven by rising demand for mobile-first entertainment and education apps. [More](#)
 - o The report found that Android user acquisition (UA) advertising spends for short drama subscription apps in the region increased by 423% year-on-year.
 - o The Indian Subcontinent recorded a 95% increase in subscription-paid installs and accounted for 49% of global net paid install growth.
- WPP Media forecasts India's advertising market to grow 8.8% in 2026, reaching \$22.5 billion despite geopolitical and oil price risks, with digital, commerce and AI-led advertising driving growth. [More](#)
- Zee Entertainment has secured the Indian media rights to broadcast 39 FIFA events from 2026 to 2034, including the 2026 and 2030 FIFA World Cups and the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup, marking its return to sports broadcasting. [More](#)
- According to Adobe's 2026 AI and Digital Trends Report, 60% of Indian consumers want a personal AI agent, the highest in the Asia-Pacific region, underscoring strong demand for AI-powered digital experiences. [More](#)

VII. Actions

1. Travel South USA International Showcase 2026

- Successfully recruited 8 travel trade and 2 Media delegates for the upcoming showcase (1 trade delegate confirmation pending)
- Registration process currently underway with 4 trade delegates and 2 Media delegates successfully registered

1. PR

- July Theme – Alabama Road Trip

1. 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.