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Revenge tourism in Banyumas Regency: Examining the interrelationship among social media, overtourism, and post-COVID-19 impacts

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the global tourism industry, and "Revenge Tourism" has emerged in Banyumas Regency. This study examines the complex relationship between social media, pandemic travel, and overtourism. We combined quantitative social media analytics with qualitative stakeholder insights using the MAXQDA research tool and a mixed-methods approach. This analysis clarified the complex relationships between the factors above. Following the pandemic, Banyumas saw a 70% increase in tourists and a 55% increase in social media interactions. These findings show how digital platforms boost Banyumas' visibility and the challenges and opportunities that come with tourism. This study emphasizes sustainable tourism and environmental conservation. To mitigate overtourism's adverse effects, it emphasizes specific interventions. This research gives the global tourism industry valuable insights into post-pandemic tourism management.

Keywords: revenge tourism; post-COVID-19; overtourism; social media; Banyumas Regency

1. Introduction

The global tourism industry, which plays a crucial role in the economies of many countries, has traditionally been recognized for its dynamic nature and ability to adapt to changing circumstances[1–3]. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges, leading to a significant shift in global travel behaviors and priorities[4–6]. Following the relaxation of restrictions, a noteworthy phenomenon known as "Revenge Tourism" has surfaced[7]. This term refers to the behavior of individuals who, after enduring prolonged periods of confinement, engage in travel activities with a heightened sense of enthusiasm[8,9]. The increase in travel, particularly in areas such as Banyumas Regency, has been intensified by the deliberate utilization of social media platforms, which have a significant impact on shaping perspectives and impacting travel choices[10–12]. The current surge in tourism enthusiasm offers a promising chance for economic rejuvenation; however, it also brings forth notable obstacles concerning the issues of overtourism and environmental deterioration[13,14].

The influence of social media in altering the tourism industry has been widely acknowledged in the realm of literature[15,16]. Research has shed light on the phenomenon of previously unknown destinations gaining popularity as a result of viral social media campaigns or endorsements by influential individuals[17–19]. Simultaneously, the period following the COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to discussions surrounding the phenomenon known as "Revenge Tourism", prompting scholars to voice apprehensions regarding its potential consequences[20,21]. According to Kumar and Garg[22], the occurrence of overtourism, defined as the excessive arrival of tourists leading to issues such as traffic congestion and environmental deterioration, may escalate into a significant concern following the conclusion of the current pandemic. The Banyumas Regency, which has previously demonstrated proficiency in managing the flow of tourists, is currently exhibiting indications of pressure. This situation necessitates a more thorough investigation into the dynamic relationship between travel trends influenced by social media and post-pandemic travel behaviors.

Given the aforementioned context, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the intricacies underlying the Revenge Tourism phenomenon in Banyumas Regency. Although the current body of literature offers a fundamental comprehension, there remains a deficiency in understanding the complex dynamics between the impact of social media, the consequences of the pandemic, and the subsequent escalation of overtourism in particular areas such as Banyumas. This study utilized a mixed-methods research methodology. This approach involves the integration of quantitative analysis of social media data with qualitative perspectives obtained from relevant stakeholders. The objective of this extensive analysis is to examine the intricate connection between these variables, clarifying their combined influence on the tourism industry and the ecological sustainability of the area[23].

Based on the underlying assumption that the substantial increase in tourism in Banyumas is not a temporary consequence of the pandemic but rather closely linked to the pervasive influence of social media, we propose the hypothesis that social media serves as a substantial catalyst in the escalation of overtourism in the post-COVID-19 context. Based on Stephen[24] arguments regarding the influential role of digital platforms in influencing consumer behaviors, we propose that unregulated social media campaigns, in conjunction with the accumulated desire for travel after the pandemic, may pose a potential threat to the environmental and socio-cultural aspects of destinations such as Banyumas. This study aims to analyze the complex interplay between social media, travel behaviors following the pandemic, and the subsequent challenges of overtourism.

2. Literature review

The concept of "Revenge Tourism" has recently been incorporated into scholarly and professional vocabularies, representing the strong inclination to engage in travel following extended periods of limitations or hardships[25]. Researchers observe that the emergence of this phenomenon can be attributed to a combination of pent-up demand, emotional catharsis, and the inherent human drive for exploration and social engagement[9,26]. According to Ketter[27], Revenge Tourism represents more than a simple rebound; rather, it serves as a significant expression of reclaiming personal liberty and exhibiting resilience in the face of crises.

The phenomenon of overtourism, which refers to the excessive influx of tourists resulting in congestion, strain on infrastructure, and environmental degradation, has been extensively studied in several international locations including Venice, Barcelona, and Santorini[28]. In the aforementioned areas, the arrival of tourists, frequently motivated by cost-effective transportation options and assertive promotional efforts, surpassed the maximum sustainable limit, resulting in socio-cultural and environmental disturbances[29,30]. These case studies highlight the potential hazards linked to unregulated expansion of tourism, particularly in areas that are sensitive and hold historical significance.

The tourism industry has undergone a significant transformation due to the advent of social media, which has provided travelers with platforms to exchange their experiences, solicit recommendations, and make well-informed choices[31,32]. The interconnected nature of social media and tourism can be understood through the lens of the "experience economy", wherein travelers engage in the curation, sharing, and consumption of travel experiences on digital platforms[33,34]. According to Jovial and Emy[35], this phenomenon has resulted in a shift in tourist behavior, wherein they now assume the roles of both consumers and producers of travel content.

In recent years, Banyumas Regency has witnessed a notable increase in its tourism prominence, owing to its abundant cultural heritage and picturesque landscapes[36,37]. According to Kuzucanli and Barakazi[17], there is anecdotal evidence indicating that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, have played significant roles in enhancing their attractiveness. Within the context of Indonesia, digital influencers and local communities have effectively highlighted lesser-known tourist destinations[38,39]. However, this unintentional promotion has resulted in overcrowding at these locations, reflecting a phenomenon of overtourism that is increasingly influenced by social media on a global scale[40,41].

The current state of tourism following the COVID-19 pandemic is marked by a combination of prudence, flexibility, and a strong desire to engage in travel[42,43]. From a conceptual standpoint, scholars perceive this particular time frame as a pivotal stage during which the industry confronts novel standards, modified patterns of traveler conduct, and the difficulties associated with guaranteeing safety while simultaneously meeting the underlying desire for travel[44]. Koliopoulos and Katsoni[45] highlight the necessity of adopting innovative strategies during this time, which involve integrating health protocols with sustainable tourism practices.

The post-COVID-19 era has witnessed a tourism industry characterized by a convergence of cautiousness, adaptability, and a fervent inclination towards travel[46,47]. From a theoretical perspective, academics perceive this specific period as a crucial phase in which the industry grapples with new standards, altered patterns of traveler behavior, and the challenges of ensuring safety while also satisfying the fundamental desire for travel[48–50]. Illario et al.[51] emphasize the imperative of implementing innovative approaches in the current context, specifically by combining health protocols with sustainable tourism practices.

3. Methods

The central focus of this study revolves around the examination of the tourism landscape in Banyumas Regency. Specifically, it explores the interconnections between the influence of social media, the behavior of Revenge Tourism in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resulting occurrences of overtourism. This encompasses both the physical spaces commonly visited by tourists, including tourist attractions, accommodations, and transportation hubs, as well as the digital realm, primarily social media platforms where Banyumas Regency is discussed, promoted, or reviewed.

In order to achieve a thorough comprehension of the complex nature of the research inquiry, a mixed-methods research design was utilized. This approach effectively integrates quantitative and qualitative research methods, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Quantitative methods enable the identification of patterns and the derivation of generalizable conclusions from structured data, such as social media analytics. On the other hand, qualitative methods focus on exploring the nuanced perspectives of stakeholders, capturing the depth and intricacies of their experiences and viewpoints[52].

Participants in this study were chosen by the researchers using a purposive sample technique, with a focus on people who had a direct connection to or influence over the Banyumas Regency tourism industry. The participants in this study included local tourism officials, tourist attraction managers, hoteliers, local residents, tourists, and digital influencers or content creators who have actively promoted Banyumas on different social

media platforms. In addition, regarding the quantitative aspect, data regarding Banyumas Regency was gathered from diverse social media platforms, with particular attention given to posts, comments, reviews, and other forms of user-generated content.

The collection of qualitative data was conducted using various methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations. The researchers conducted interviews with a total of 30 participants, who were divided into five different stakeholder groups. Focus group discussions were methodically organized with distinct groups, such as local residents and tourists, to encourage conversation and gather collective viewpoints. The research methodology utilized in this study involved carrying out 13 field observations at well-known tourist destinations. The objective was to directly observe and analyze different aspects of tourist behavior, infrastructure, and signs of overtourism. Data on Banyumas tourism was gathered for quantitative analysis by extracting information from social media platforms using web scraping tools and analytics APIs. The data collection process mainly focused on metrics such as engagement rates, sentiment analysis, and content trends.

Data analysis was conducted in two distinct phases, corresponding to the qualitative and quantitative segments of the research. The qualitative data analysis utilized the MAXQDA research tool to facilitate the process of thematic analysis, enabling the identification and coding of patterns, themes, and categories[53]. This facilitated the acquisition of valuable insights regarding the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders. Simultaneously, quantitative data extracted from social media platforms was subjected to statistical analysis employing SPSS software. The analysis primarily entailed descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, aiming to discern prevailing trends, correlations, and noteworthy patterns. The concluding phase encompassed the amalgamation of both sets of discoveries, employing triangulation of the data to offer a comprehensive perspective on the research issue.

4. Result

After the easing of travel restrictions, there was a significant surge in tourism figures in Banyumas Regency. The increase in tourism can be attributed to the phenomenon known as revenge tourism, which is a behavioral response that arises from extended periods of confinement and travel limitations experienced during the pandemic. According to data from the Banyumas Tourism Office, there has been a substantial 70% (373,743) surge in tourist arrivals during the six-month period subsequent to the pandemic, in comparison to the corresponding period in the preceding year. The substantial increase in travel not only signifies the strong inclination of individuals to engage in tourism but also highlights the various difficulties and prospects that arise for destinations such as Banyumas.

Figures 1 and **2** can serve as representations of the conditions that occur in tourism in Banyumas. The initial picture portrays Baturraden, a tourist spot in Banyumas, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. It visually illustrates the desolate state of tourism due to the significant disruption caused by the global health crisis, resulting in a decline in visitor count. The serene atmosphere in typically bustling areas exemplifies the catastrophic consequences of the pandemic, as indicated by the absence of tourists and the shutdown of tourist destinations. This elucidates the challenging predicament faced by tourist destinations in Banyumas as a result of uncontrollable external factors, thereby creating avenues for discourse on post-pandemic recovery endeavors. Conversely, the second image portrays a bustling setting at the post-COVID tourist destination Baturraden, emphasizing the occurrence of overtourism that has arisen subsequent to the relaxation of travel limitations. The presence of crowded roads and popular tourist sites indicates a high number of tourists, which aligns with the concerns expressed by stakeholders about the growing congestion and strain on infrastructure.

The images substantiate the research findings and confirm concerns about the negative consequences of the increase in tourism numbers in Banyumas Regency after the pandemic.

The impact of social media platforms on travel behaviors in the contemporary digital era is unquestionable. Our study placed significant emphasis on this phenomenon, with particular attention given to the role of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok in effectively promoting the various attractions of Banyumas, including both well-established and recently discovered ones. According to the analytics data, there was a significant increase of 55% in user engagement with posts pertaining to Banyumas after the occurrence of the pandemic. The increase in travel interest indicates that social media has significantly influenced travel choices, effectively promoting Banyumas as an appealing destination in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.
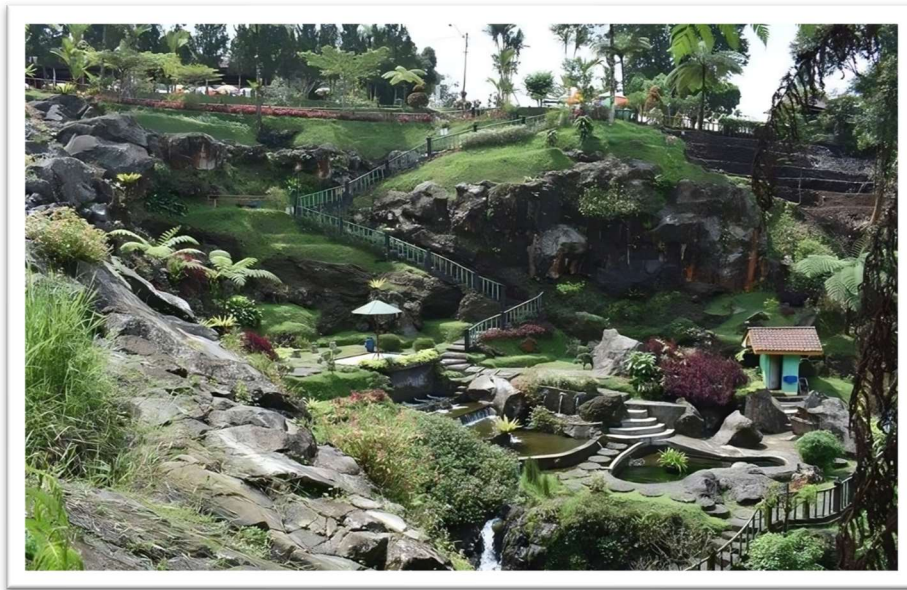

Figure 1. Baturraden Banyumas tourist location amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2. Overtourism at the tourist destination of Baturraden Banyumas following COVID-19.

Involving local stakeholders in the process helps to ensure that the various effects of the tourism boom are fully understood. Business owners, specifically, display a contrast of viewpoints. While these individuals acknowledge and often appreciate the economic advantages that come with an increase in tourist visits, they

also express concerns about the long-term sustainability of this growth. **Figure 3** displays the outcomes of the interviews, revealing that a significant majority of approximately 80% expressed their gratitude for the tangible economic advantages linked to this circumstance. Nevertheless, a significant majority of approximately 65% voiced apprehension regarding the possible enduring repercussions, such as the escalation of overtourism and the strain on current infrastructure.
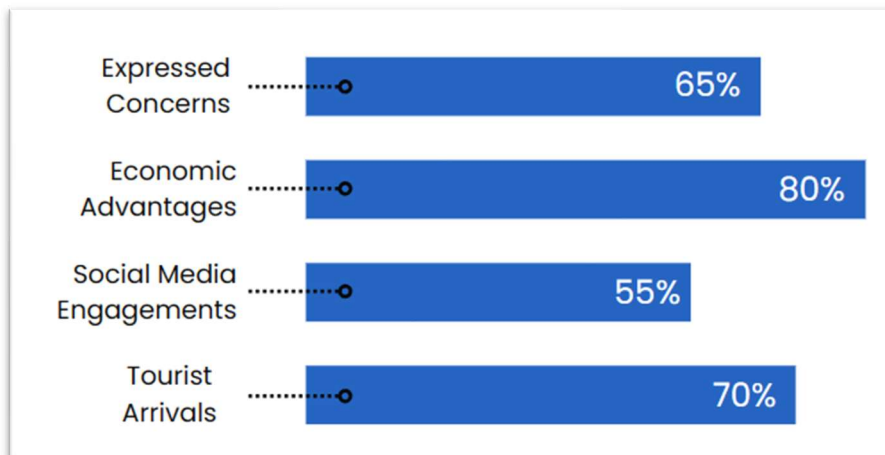
Figure 3. Key finding from the research on Banyumas Regency tourism.

The practice of environmental stewardship plays a crucial role in the implementation of sustainable tourism. Nevertheless, the exponential and unregulated increase in tourist populations can give rise to substantial environmental obstacles. The field observations and stakeholder interviews conducted in Banyumas have brought attention to the increasing concerns in the area. A number of locations, once renowned for their unspoiled magnificence, currently display indications of litter accumulation, erosion, and disruptions to natural habitats. The aforementioned realities experienced on the ground highlight the urgent requirement for the implementation of efficient environmental management strategies in order to safeguard the natural heritage of Banyumas.

Digital influencers have emerged as influential participants in the tourism ecosystem due to their extensive reach and the profound impact of their content. Our study focused on the undeniable influence they have on the attractiveness of Banyumas as a tourist destination. The analysis of the data demonstrated significant associations between influencer endorsements and notable increases in online searches and inquiries pertaining to Banyumas. The aforementioned phenomenon highlights the significant influence and accountability that digital content creators possess, thereby emphasizing the imperative for cooperation between influencers and local authorities in order to foster conscientious tourism.

The viewpoints of the local inhabitants, who serve as the primary stewards of Banyumas's cultural and natural heritage, hold utmost significance. The various interactions we engaged in provided a nuanced and complex depiction. Although a significant number of residents acknowledged the economic benefits associated with the growth of tourism, there were also expressions of concern regarding potential cultural dilution, heightened noise levels, and daily disturbances. The presence of conflicting emotions underscores the importance for destinations such as Banyumas to carefully navigate the trade-off between capitalizing on economic advantages and safeguarding the welfare and contentment of their indigenous populations.

The rapid expansion of tourism frequently highlights infrastructural challenges. Banyumas encountered comparable challenges due to its historical infrastructure. Local transportation hubs, accommodations, and attractions frequently exceeded their originally planned capacities. These strains have a dual effect, as they not

only affect the overall quality of the tourist experience but also give rise to concerns regarding the long-term sustainability and potential degradation of local amenities and services.

Understanding the behavior of tourists is essential to enabling effective destination management. The research findings depicted in **Figure 4** unveil a compelling pattern. The majority of tourists who visit Banyumas are inexperienced travelers who are primarily influenced by promotional campaigns on social media platforms. The observed behavior clearly indicates a strong inclination towards popular locations, leading to frequent overcrowding. This pattern emphasizes the necessity of implementing effective strategies in the management of tourists, which may entail promoting less popular attractions to achieve a more equitable distribution of tourist flow.
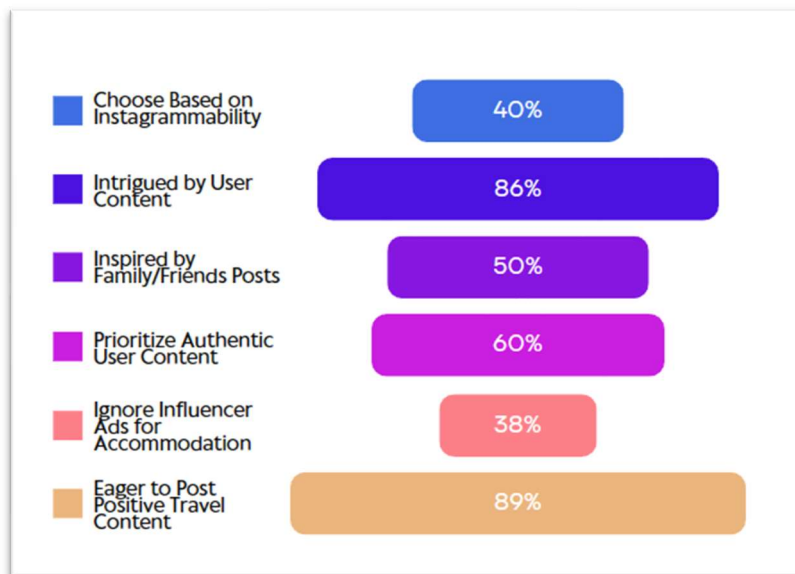
Figure 4. Social media and user-generated content influence travel choices and experiences.

The concept of sustainability was consistently observed as a prominent theme throughout our research endeavors. The surge in tourism following the post-pandemic period has resulted in immediate economic advantages for Banyumas. However, concerns have been raised regarding the long-term sustainability of this trend. The findings from stakeholder interviews and data analysis consistently underscored the urgent necessity for the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies. These strategies should not only address immediate needs but also aim to sustain Banyumas as a thriving and attractive destination for future generations.

5. Discussion

The surge in tourism in Banyumas Regency following the pandemic, as observed in our findings, reflects the wider global phenomenon known as revenge tourism. The significant surge in numbers can be interpreted as a collective reaction to an extended period of confinement and limitations on travel. The notable aspect lies in the considerable scale of the rise, indicating that destinations, particularly those with robust online presence, may encounter comparable upswings in the aftermath of the pandemic. This highlights the necessity for these destinations to possess sufficient preparations, encompassing infrastructure and sustainability measures, in order to effectively manage the surge in visitors.

The findings of our study align with previous scholarly works that highlight the significant impact of social media in enhancing the influence of digital platforms within the tourism sector. The rapid increase in user interactions on social media posts pertaining to Banyumas in the post-pandemic period serves as evidence

of the expeditious ability of platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to enhance the visibility and reputation of a particular location. This phenomenon offers promising marketing prospects; however, it necessitates the exercise of responsible promotion to ensure that the digital representation remains consistent with the actual conditions and capabilities of the destination.

As seen in **Figure 5**, the varied viewpoints articulated by different local stakeholders, especially those involved in the business sector, offer valuable insight into the intricate difficulties linked to efficiently handling periods of heightened tourism activity. The economic advantages of tourism are evident, however, there are also apprehensions, particularly pertaining to sustainability, that coincide with worldwide concerns regarding well-liked tourist destinations. The objective of harmonizing economic prosperity with long-term environmental viability is a complex undertaking, emphasizing the significance of an all-encompassing decision-making process that engages all pertinent stakeholders in shaping the trajectory of tourism in the area.

Figure 5. Obstacles and opportunities faced by Banyumas Regency in the post-pandemic tourism landscape.

The environmental challenges witnessed in Banyumas align with global trends, wherein the rapid expansion of tourism, particularly in ecologically vulnerable regions, can result in substantial environmental deterioration. The study underscores the necessity of taking proactive measures in response to the immediate environmental consequences. Given the ongoing prominence of tourism as a prevailing sector, it becomes imperative for destinations to place environmental stewardship at the forefront of their priorities. This entails safeguarding the natural resources that frequently serve as the primary allure for tourists, thereby ensuring their preservation for the benefit of forthcoming generations.

The examination of tourists' behavioral patterns, particularly their preference for popular tourist destinations, provides valuable insights for effective destination management. The concentration of tourists in particular destinations has been observed to give rise to the phenomenon of overtourism, which can exert pressure on local resources and potentially undermine the quality of the tourist experience. The implementation of strategies such as the diversification of tourist attractions, the promotion of off-the-beaten-path experiences, and the adoption of effective crowd management techniques can contribute to the equitable distribution of tourist footfall. This, in turn, can foster a more sustainable and enjoyable experience for all individuals involved in the tourism industry.

The central theme of sustainability that arose from our research aligns with the ongoing global dialogue surrounding sustainable tourism. The period following the pandemic presents destinations with a chance to reevaluate and reorient their strategies. In light of the remarkable expansion witnessed in destinations such as Banyumas, it is imperative to prioritize the implementation of sustainable management practices to effectively address this growth. The incorporation of environmental, economic, and socio-cultural factors is crucial in

guaranteeing that tourism continues to have a positive impact, providing advantages to both tourists and local communities.

6. Conclusion

The investigation into the tourism landscape of Banyumas Regency during the period following the pandemic has revealed a number of significant findings. The primary observation of note is the significant increase in tourist figures, which can be attributed directly to the global phenomenon known as "Revenge Tourism". The increase in population, which has been greatly magnified by the influential impact of social media platforms, has presented both advantageous prospects for economic rejuvenation and difficulties associated with the burden on infrastructure, potential loss of cultural identity, and environmental deterioration.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the academic discourse by offering a comprehensive analysis of the complex relationship between post-pandemic travel behaviors, the influence of social media, and the challenges posed by overtourism, particularly in the context of Banyumas Regency. While previous studies have separately investigated these components, this research presents a holistic viewpoint that fills the existing gaps and presents a comprehensive framework. The utilization of a mixed-methods approach, which integrates quantitative social media analytics alongside qualitative stakeholder insights, enhances the comprehensiveness and scope of this study, rendering it a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners involved in the realm of sustainable tourism.

Although this particular study offers valuable insights, it is crucial to recognize and address its inherent limitations. The study primarily concentrated on Banyumas Regency, and although the results have wider implications, their generalizability may be limited. The temporal scope of the investigation, which focuses on the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, may not fully encompass enduring patterns and ramifications. Furthermore, it is important to note that although the mixed-methods approach offers a comprehensive perspective, the dynamic nature of social media and digital influence necessitates ongoing monitoring and periodic research to remain current with the latest trends and effects.

Author contributions

Conceptualization, MY and DSS; methodology, DPSM; software, AN; validation, MY, DPSM and AN; formal analysis, MY; investigation, DSS; resources, MY; data curation, AN; writing—original draft preparation, MY; writing—review and editing, DPSM; visualization, AN; supervision, DSS; project administration, AN; funding acquisition, MY. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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