

**A STUDY ON EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL MARKETING UTILIZED BY TOURISTS
IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF KERALA**

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Abstract:

Digital marketing is vital in promoting tourism in the northern districts of Kerala by expanding reach, facilitating engagement, enhancing the visitor experience, and contributing to the destination's overall growth and sustainability. In this modern era of powerful online technology and tools, connecting to potential customers has become considerably easier. These days Internet marketing is becoming a necessary strategy for all sizes of businesses. The growing significance of digital marketing in consumer acquisition and brand promotion greatly influences business at present. Travel and tourism have always been ahead of other businesses in adopting technological trends. Online Booking, Reviews, Digital Marketing, Innovative concepts like social media marketing and promotion and the use of digital technology have become the new face of the tourism industry. This has resulted in increased revenue and revolutionary changes in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Digital Tourism, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Social media marketing (SMM), Pay Per Click (PPC), Influencer Marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Kerala, renowned for its flourishing landscapes, coastal allure, and vibrant culture, attracts tourists worldwide with its breathtaking scenery, lush forests, and diverse wildlife. Its backwaters, beaches, and hill stations allure both domestic and international travellers. The state's cultural richness is showcased through traditional art forms like Kathakali and Mohiniyattam, along with martial arts like Kalaripayattu, during vibrant festivals. Home stays offer tourists an authentic glimpse into Kerala's rural life and cuisine. Besides, Kerala has become a hub for health tourism, offering Ayurveda and yoga treatments. Geographically divided into North, Central, and South regions, each offers unique experiences. Digital marketing has significantly bolstered Kerala tourism, enabling interactive platforms for user engagement and feedback. Kerala Tourism has embraced digital marketing tools like YouTube and micro sites effectively, fostering direct interactions with potential customers and enabling measurable returns on investment. Social media platforms play a pivotal role in destination marketing, allowing governments to showcase destinations and engage with travellers. With travellers increasingly relying on social media for trip planning and sharing experiences, digital marketing has transformed the tourism landscape, making it more accessible and interactive globally.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's digital era, consumers heavily rely on internet platforms and digital technologies for researching and purchasing products and services. Businesses must leverage digital marketing tactics like SEO, social media, Influencer marketing and mobile advertising to engage customers effectively. The tourism industry, facing intense competition, has seen significant growth but also challenges for tourists in choosing destinations and accessing local information. Northern Kerala's tourism sector has embraced digital marketing tools to address these challenges, resulting in increased tourist engagement. Recognizing the importance of digital marketing in shaping consumer behavior, this study aims to explore its effectiveness on tourism products in Northern Kerala, offering insights into its effectiveness and implications for the industry.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objectives are:

- To analyze the impact of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and Websites in digital marketing among tourists in northern districts of Kerala.
- To assess the impact and influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) among tourists in northern districts of Kerala.
- To study the impact of booking Apps on digital marketing among tourists in northern districts of Kerala
- To evaluate the effectiveness and impact of different marketing methods among tourists in northern districts of Kerala.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Durrani, Z., Zia, Asbah., Ali, T. Y. & Shahid, M. N. (2023). In the study attempted establish the impact of digital marketing is highly effective in making UAE's tourism industry more profitable. This study mainly focused on the innovative concepts of digital marketing and its use on new platforms. Here it examines the utilizations of digital marketing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the economic in the tourism industry. It is decisive for organizations in the tourism sector according to changing trends. Because the tourism economy of the UAE is mostly dependent on the revenue generated from this sector.

Balamuraly. B: Ph.D. Thesis (2022) made a detailed analysis of study about Influence of Digital Marketing: A Study on Tourists in Kerala the basic concepts of digital marketing in tourism, Kerala tourism, and its importance. The study mainly focuses on local and foreign tourists. Innovative use of digital technology in the tourism sector of Kerala applicability was discussed. The digital platforms and solutions within tourism practice, user-generated content, and related interactive digital platforms became key studies. This inspection attempted to include important places in all the 14 districts in the major tourist destinations in Kerala.

Tom Nuenen and Caroline Scarles (2021) discussed mainly in the tourism sector, it was discussed about the proper use of advanced digital technology to increase responsiveness, accountability etc. The study includes the behavior and emergence of lenses within tourism practice, associated interactive digital platforms, and the impact of the proliferation of interactive digital platforms and solutions. And Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) and parallel changes in tourist behavior in the digital marketing.

Eran Ketter and Eli Avrahan (2021) a study was conducted on "Stay Home Today Digital Marketing Strategies of Tourism Destinations for Tomorrow during the Covid-19 Pandemic". It found that tourist destinations marketed themselves mainly during the Covid-19 (March-May 2020). The focus during the Covid-19 is on digital marketing. It was examined which digital marketing strategies were used in the said tourism crisis. Ensuring that, scholars and practitioners can serve in research and mitigation.

Suneel Kumar and Shekhar (2020) Conducting "Technology and Innovation: Changing Concepts of Rural Tourism – A Systematic Review". It mainly emphasizes on sustainable rural tourism, sustainable tourism and rural tourism conceptualization and its significance are evident. Moreover, the use of technology has been developed to enable rural tourism. The conclusion from the available literature states that rural tourism offers significant benefits that can solve many problems of the economy and the tourism industry.

Chandan Kumar Mishra (2020) in an article on "Digital Marketing: Scope, Opportunities, and Challenges highlighted the importance of digital reforms which find a marketplace to reach the right consumer". With the economic development of the country and the innovative use of the Internet, consumer needs and their expectations have improved. As a result, comfort, pleasure, and service have become important criteria for product selection.

Canovi and Pucciarelli (2019) "Social media marketing in wine tourism: winery owners' perceptions", in a study conducted on social media marketing, it was found that the majority of owners working in the tourism sector are not using the full potential of social media. Especially, recognizing

the economic, and emotional benefits. But due to obstacles like the engrossing of social media, the infinite potential of social media is not fully exploited.

SCOPE OF STUDY

This study focused on examining the impact and effectiveness of digital marketing on tourists visiting northern districts of Kerala. Main and sub-variables are identified based on various digital marketing techniques used in the tourism sector, drawing from existing literature, reports, and expert opinions. Respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of these variables are collected to analyze their impact. Personal profile variables are also examined to understand respondents' backgrounds. The level of influence is assessed using percentage levels, mean satisfaction, standard deviation, and covariance. A regression equation model is developed to explore the relationship between digital marketing and tourist behavior, considering correlation and correlation square, as well as Beta values. Inferences are drawn from the analysis, including test results of hypotheses, and conclusions and recommendations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary Source

The data was collected through a questionnaire from 200 respondents in the northern districts of Kerala.

Secondary Source

The data have been collected from the records of the Directorate of Kerala Tourism, Department of Kerala Tourism, Ministry of Kerala Tourism, Government of India and Government of Kerala, Economic Review of the State Planning Board, Government of Kerala, DTPC Kasaragod, DTPC Kannur, DTPC Wayanad, DTPC Kozhikode, Books and working papers. The study report of Journals, Dailies, Websites and, Booking Apps.

Tools used for Data Analysis

The methods of percentages, frequencies and chi-square test were used to analyze the collected data.

Period of the study

The period from September 2023 to November 2023 was used to conduct this study.

Area of the study

It is attempted in selected tourist destination in Northern Districts in Kerala (Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, and Kozhikode).

Sampling Design

The study covers the major tourist areas of Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikode in the northern districts of Kerala. 200 tourists were randomly selected. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the said study.

Limitations of Study

1. Tourists from other states outside Kerala are reluctant to provide accurate details.
2. Only 200 respondents were selected for sampling including other states.
3. Data are collected only from selected tourist destinations in four districts of Northern Kerala.

Hypothesis

1. "There is no significant relationship between monthly income and purposes of visiting" on tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.
2. "There is no significant relationship between gender and sources of awareness" of digital marketing platforms on tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

TABLE – No.1

Profile of the respondents

Group		No. of Tourists				Total	
		Domestic		Other States			
		No. of Tourists	%	No. of Tourists	%	No. of Tourists	%
Gender	Male	99	53	7	54	106	53 %
	Female	88	47	6	46	94	47 %
	Total	187	100	13	100	200	100
Age	Below 30 Years	48	26	4	31	52	26 %
	30 - 45 Years	77	41	6	46	83	41 %
	Above 45 Years	62	33	3	23	65	33 %
	Total	187	100	13	100	200	100
Educational Qualification	SSLC / +2	26	14	0	0	26	13 %
	Graduation	60	32	7	54	67	34 %
	Post Graduate	46	25	4	31	50	25 %
	Professional	55	29	2	15	57	28 %
	Total	187	100	13	100	200	100
Profession	Govt. Employee	42	23	3	23	45	23 %
	Private Sector Employee	50	27	5	39	55	27 %
	Business	45	24	3	23	48	24 %
	Profession	36	19	2	15	38	19 %
	Others	14	7	0	0	14	7 %
	Total	187	100	13	100	200	100
Monthly Income	Up to 20,000	24	13	0	0	24	12 %
	20,001 –30,000	51	27	3	23	54	27 %
	30,001 – 40,000	76	41	4	31	80	40 %
	40,000 Above	36	19	6	46	42	21 %
	Total	187	100	13	100	200	100

Table No.1 clearly shows the segment profile of the obtained. According to it, most of the respondents are male and in the age group of 30-45 years. It is very clear that graduate level qualification is more than other educational groups. According to the data of the respondents, it is understood that majority of them are working as private sector employees. According to the survey, the sample of the respondents had a monthly household income between Rs 30,001 - 40,000.

TABLE – No.2

District-wise source of information

District Wise	Domestic Tourists		Other states Tourists		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Kasaragod	47	25	3	23	50	25
Kannur	38	20	2	16	40	20
Wayanad	54	29	5	38	59	30
Kozhikode	48	26	3	23	51	25
Total	187	100	13	100	200	100

Source: The Primary Data

According the Table 2 shown that 30% of the respondents were from the Wayanad district, 25% were from the Kozhikode district, 25% were from the Kasaragod district, and 20% of the respondents were from the Kannur district. Out of the 59 respondents in the Wayanad district, 54 respondents are Domestic and 5 respondents are other states. Out of the 51 respondents in the Kozhikode district, 48 respondents are Domestic and 3 respondents are other states. Out of the 50 respondents in the Kasaragod district, 47 respondents are Domestic and 3 respondents are other states tourists. Out of the 40 respondents in the Kannur district, 38 respondents are Domestic and 2 respondents are other states.

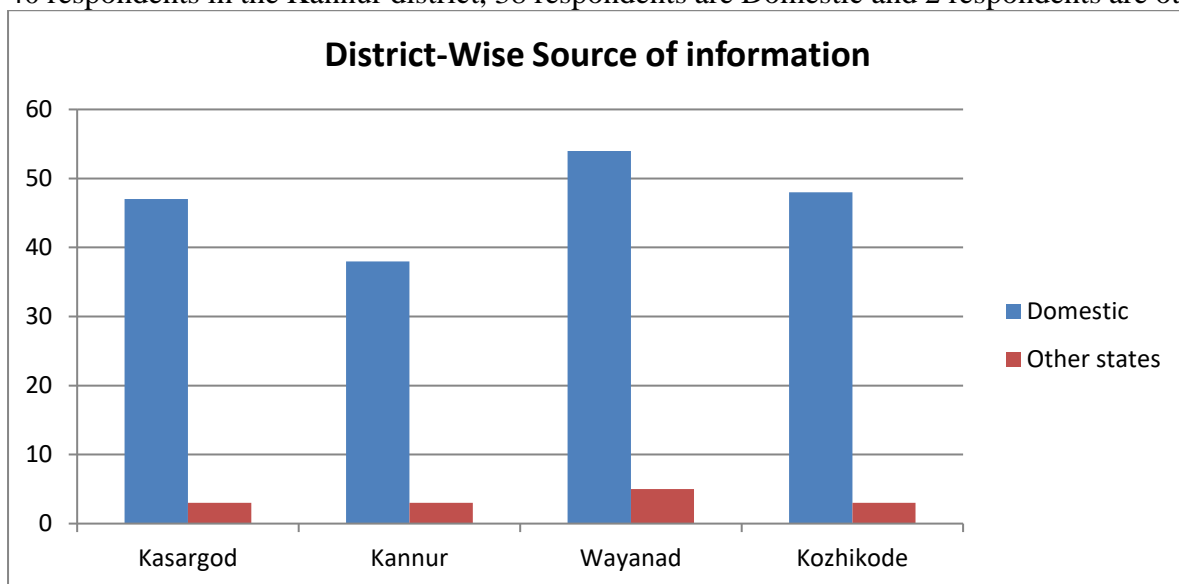


TABLE – No.3

Distribution based on the purpose of the visit of respondents

Purpose of visit	Domestic Tourists		Other state Tourists		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sight Seeing	38	20	3	23	41	21
Adventure	30	16	2	15	32	16
Plantation and Hill	37	20	2	15	39	19
Medical and Yoga (Ayurveda)	16	9	1	9	17	9
Beaches and Backwaters	36	19	3	23	39	19

Cultural and Heritage	30	16	2	15	32	16
Total	187	100	13	100	200	100

Source: The Primary Data

According to the Table 3 specifying that 21% of the respondents visited Northern Kerala for sight-seeing. 19% visited for enjoying plantation and hill tourism, 19 % visited Northern Kerala for enjoying beach and backwater tourism and 16 % of the respondents visited Northern Kerala for enjoying the cultural and heritage tourism. 16% visited with a purpose of involving adventure tourism, 9 % visited Northern Kerala for attending medical and yoga treatment.

Chart I: Distribution based on the purpose of the visit of respondents

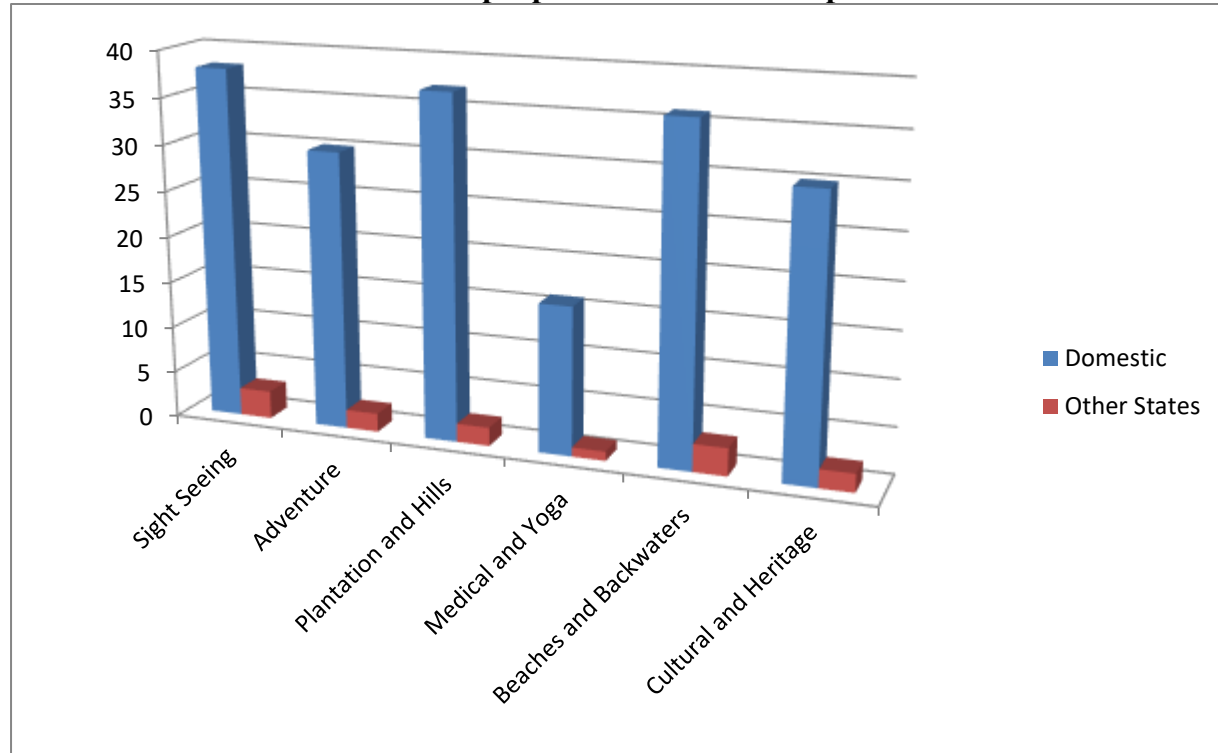


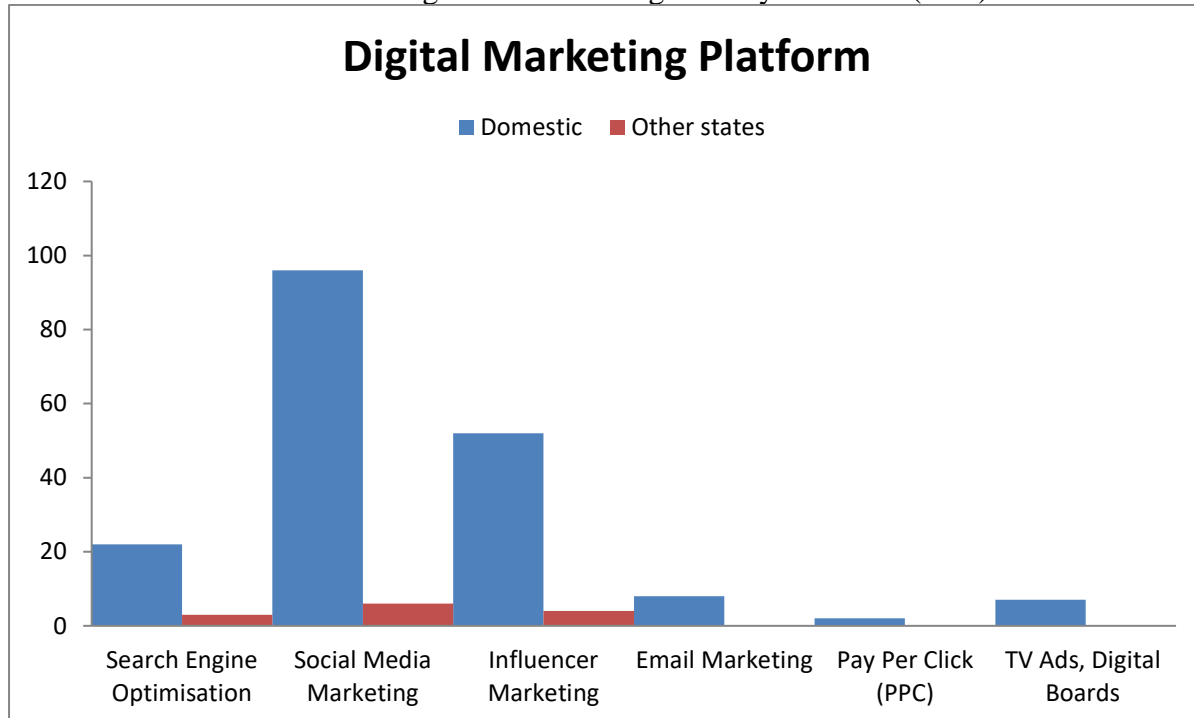
TABLE – No.4

Sources of awareness about tourist places using the digital marketing platforms

	Domestic Tourists		Other state Tourists		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	22	12	3	24	25	12.5
Social Media Marketing	96	51	6	46	102	51
Influencer Marketing	52	28	4	30	56	28
Email Marketing	8	4	0	0	8	4
Pay Per Click (PPC)	2	1	0	0	2	1
TV Ads, Digital Boards	7	4	0	0	7	3.5
Total	187	100	13	100	200	100

Source: The Primary Data

Table 4 shows that, 51% of the respondents' sources of awareness about tourist places used in the digital marketing platform are Social media marketing. 28% of the respondent's source of awareness about tourist places is Influencer marketing. Awareness about tourist places used in the digital marketing platform 12.5% is Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). 3.5% of the respondents came to know about the tourist destination through TV Ads, Digital Boards. 4% of the respondents came to know about the tourist destination using Email Marketing and Pay Per Click (PPC) is 1%.



Test (Chi-Square)

Null Hypothesis - 1

"There is no significant relationship between monthly income and purposes of visiting" on the tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.

	Value	d.f	Significance (2-sided)
"Pearson Chi-Square value"	25.67a	3	.001
"Likelihood Ratio"	20.12	3	.001
"Liner-by-Linear Association"	15.28	1	.001
"No. of Valid Cases"	200		

a.8 cells (57.1%) have expected count < 5. The min. expected count = 0.05

Result: Since the Chi-square value (25.67) exceeds the Table value at a significance level of 0.05. The result is there are "no significant relationship between monthly financial income and purposes of visiting" on the tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.

Null Hypothesis - 2

"There is no significant relationship between gender and source of awareness" of digital marketing platforms on tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.

	Value	d.f	Significance (2-sided)
"Pearson Chi-Square Value"	18.56a	2	.001
"Likelihood Ratio"	15.28	2	.001
"Liner-by-Linear Association"	10.74	1	.001
"No. of Valid Cases"	200		

a.8 cells (57.1%) have expected count < 5. The min. expected count = 0.05

Result: Since the Pearson Chi-Square value (18.56) exceeds the Table value at a significance level of 0.05. The result is there are “no significant relationship between gender and source of awareness of digital marketing” platforms on tourists in the northern districts of the Kerala.

Suggestions

1. The digital marketing team should also see to it that the forms used in website should be as short and sweet.
2. The digital marketing team should make sure that Google analytics and web master tools are updated.
3. In case of small local business the SEO professional should make sure that the Local SEO, on page SEO and word press SEO are used effectively.
4. The team should also make sure that Link facility is provided in order to connect social media, emails and other internet applications.
5. The digital marketing professional should see to it that messaging platforms such as Signal, Yahoo mail, Outlook, Skype, Brandwatch, Hootsuite, LinkedIn and We Chat are used for marketing.

Conclusions

The study findings suggest that tourists in Northern Kerala are effectiveness by digital marketing, particularly through social media and Influencer marketing. The impact of digital marketing plays a major role in increasing revenue in the tourism sector. So, those who do business in the tourism sector keep up with the new changes and trends. Adjust their marketing strategies accordingly. In the era of digitalization, digital marketing techniques are successfully utilized. A competitive advantage, higher client engagement, and improved profitability are used to capitalize on the right opportunity. very clearly, the level of influence remains consistent across gender, nationality, educational qualifications, income groups, employment status, and the purpose of the visit among tourists. Furthermore, the study reveals a positive correlation between the main variables and dependent variables, reinforcing how utilized by tourist in the northern Kerala behaviour in the region. Implementation of digital marketing strategies like search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, influencer marketing, pay per clicking (PPC), email marketing and mobile marketing among tourists in northern districts of Kerala such as Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikode are successful as far as businesses are concerned. , greatly increased exposure and audience reach.

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