



IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING TOWARDS TOURISM SECTOR IN WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

Growth in number of internet users and use of internet, along with advancement in information technology is offering abundant information in the virtual space. With the increase in number of jobs and income levels, people are showing inclination towards travel and tourism. As travellers and tourists seek instant information, gathering information online visiting websites, search engines, mobile app, e-commerce aggregators and social media has made information search easy. Voluminous information is available online which has also lead to problem of information overload. Travel & tourism service providers, in order to capture larger business and to build their brand, are doing marketing by providing travel deals online & through other digital medium which has affected business & industry. This research focuses on assessing the impact of digital marketing on travel & tourism industry. It helps in gaining an understanding on the level of impact created by digital marketing, its pros & cons, and provide suggestions for travel & tourism service providers to address relevant issues and challenges. The outcomes of the research can be used by E-Commerce aggregators, digital marketers, Mobile App service providers, social media marketers' and implementers of IT for tourism as a reference for digital marketing decisions.

Introduction:

“Travel brings power and love back into your life” It is a saying of 13th century's great Persian – Poet, **Rumi**, when you get happiness you give love to others similarly experiences gives more strength to your personality and thought which when channelize in a proper way becomes the power-Willpower. Human beings always like to discover new places or visit such places which are beautiful, influential and historical and which adds value to their life, which makes them relax, refresh and infuses new energy. These places either have been heard, listen, read, told, suggested or mentioned by someone and which rest somewhere in their mind and heart for various reasons. Every tour has its exclusive purpose for each

individual, which most of the time enlarges with actual experience by the journey of a set destination. This whole process is nothing but touring or tourism. Today it has becomes one of the most important need of human's life and it help to make life more harmonious, enriched and contended. Tourism industry is playing an important role towards the contribution to GDP (gross domestic product) of the nation, employment and balance of payment. Almost all the countries are promoting tourism on priority. The potential of tourism sector to stimulate economic and social development thereby transforming economies is internationally acknowledged. Tourism is not only a growth engine but also an employment generator. The importance of tourism as a creator of job opportunities can be understood from the fact that in India every one million invested in tourism creates 47.5% jobs directly and around 85-90% jobs indirectly. In comparison, agriculture creates only 44.6% jobs and manufacturing a mere 12.6% jobs. Moreover tourism is the **third largest foreign exchange earner** after gems, jewellery and readymade garments. In India tourism contributes 6.2% to the national GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 7.7% of total employment. World Travel and Tourism Council has predicted an annual growth of 8.8% between 2011 to 2021.

Besides this it is well-known fact that the complete potential of West Bengal tourism has not been explored yet. Since tourism is a multi-dimensional activity which is principally a service industry. The wholesome participation of all the departments of the Central and State governments, private sector and voluntary organizations, NGO's will help to attain sustainable growth in tourism. Digital marketing of Tourism is beneficial to the economy of the country and also for image building, tax benefits, educational significance, and cultural significance, earning foreign exchange and generating employment opportunities.

Tourist choice of travel destinations depends on their motivation. While one may like to relax in a beach resort another may like to spend the vacation in a hill resort. Similarly, art lovers may like to visit museums or monuments. Tourists' travel motivations may be categorized as pleasure and recreation, art and culture, nature and wildlife, training and education, health and medical, spirituality and religion, sports and adventures etc;

Recent Development in Tourism industry:

Adjectival tourism: Adjectival tourism refers to the numerous niche or specialty travel forms of tourism that have emerged over the years, each with its own adjective. Many of these have come into common use by the tourism industry and academics. Others are emerging concepts that may or may not gain popular usage. Examples of the more common niche tourism markets include: Agro – tourism, Culinary tourism, Cultural tourism, Ecotourism, Extreme tourism, Geo – tourism, Heritage tourism, Medical tourism, Nautical tourism, Pop-culture tourism, Poverty tourism, Religious tourism, Space tourism, War tourism, Wildlife tourism etc.

Culinary tourism - Food is after all an attraction, which tempts people to visit foreign lands. A visitor soon learns that Indians meals are by no means limited to hot and spicy curries, but consist of rich and varied form of traditional culinary styles. The cuisine of West Bengal is largely influenced by the landscape, the people and the crops grown in various regions. It is not only memorable for its subtle variety and strong flavours, but also because of the legendary hospitality of West Bengal.

Tourism marketing:

Marketing gives importance to customer satisfaction. It is a combination of activities to motivate people to buy the product. It is nothing but actually shopping which is deeply associated by selling and buying products and services. Travel and tourism is no different where the word digital marketing as used by many, is restricted to negotiations and publicity. Many large Tourism organization adopted digital marketing as a business strategy. Digital marketing is more emphasis on quality product and professionalism with proper aggression.

Digital marketing always focuses around the satisfaction of customer needs, wants, and requirements. It expects to identify the future needs. Tourism is a service industry; these services are intangible which can be known only after the actual experience, so it carries an amount of risk to purchase. There has been an up market trend in tourism over the last few decades. Tourists have high levels of disposable income, considerable leisure time, are well educated, and have sophisticated tastes. There is now a demand for better quality products, which has resulted in a fragmenting of the mass market for beach vacations; people want more specialized versions, quieter resorts, family-oriented holidays or niche market-targeted

destination hotels and there is a much awaited need for developing full proof marketing plan for marketing the same.

There for a digital marketing plan contains number of aspects of integrated, viable and strategic plan, which is known as marketing mix. Marketing mix, as stated, is a right combination of elements designed to get a particular set of consumer buy a product at a particular price.

Digital Marketing and Tourism Industry

The tourism industry includes all the people, activities, and organizations involved in providing services for people on holiday, for example hotels, restaurants, and tour guides. Before the launch of digital marketing, the role of people who rendered these services was indispensable to the success of the business. With the launch of the internet, newer modes of marketing the various services to the target audiences have evolved. The tourism industry, in particular, has been disrupted as a whole with the rapid development of the internet. Users purchase services related to tourism online at the click of a button while comparing amongst businesses from all over the world. In order to compete and succeed digitally, the most relevant digital marketing.

Marketing Mix:

For preparing any successful digital marketing plan, we deal with four Ps of the Marketing Mix:

- **Product:** It means attractions or tourist resources that a country can offer beautiful monuments, scenic beauty, beach and mountain resorts, transportation services, good hotel accommodation, polite and friendly people etc.
- **Price:** It implies the optimal rates at which the tourism product (holiday) can be sold.
- **Place:** Most suitable distribution channels. In other words, the markets where the product should be sold and the network through which it is sold.
- **Promotion:** It implies the communication process, public relation, promotion through advertising, etc.

Mass tourism could only have developed with the improvements in technology, allowing the transport of large numbers of people in a short space of time to places of leisure interest, so that greater number of people could begin to enjoy the benefits of leisure time. The best use of marketing mix has been done by Kerala and Gujarat. This helps them to shoot-up their revenue generation and ranking for the favorable tourist destination. The land of West Bengal possesses all the attractions that tourists love to enjoy. Present study is an attempt to analyze the prospects and problems in further development of Tourism Industry in West Bengal in the context of Digital marketing strategies adopted by the State and the private stakeholders in Tourism Industry.

Need of the study:

Marketing' – as old as man- is now in its third stage. We have seen different stages of our economy, the Industrial revolution stage, Agricultural revolution-stage and now Service Industry-stage. Tourism is basically a services industry. Tourism services differ from other manufacturing goods in terms of four main factors—intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability. Therefore if the product is not well marketed it will not give accepted result. Proper Digital Marketing helps and encourages for decision making.

Digital marketing serves the advertising, promotions, brand creation, brand building of the product. Digital marketing of Tourism is beneficial to the economy of the country and state by the image building, tax benefits and educational significance, cultural significance, earning foreign exchange, generating employment opportunities.

Significance Of the study:

“West Bengal Tourism has a tremendous potential if marketed well” West Bengal has immense tourist potential, which is currently underutilized. Though the number of tourists visiting West Bengal (Specially Mumbai) is one of the highest in India, very few tourists actually stay in the state. West Bengal is

mainly used as an entry and exit point to other destination. Most of the international tourists here were mostly one-night stay tourist.

Thus, Tourism Industry is one of the important sources of generating employment for local youth, wherein the services of locals can be utilized for tourists via souvenir shops, restaurants, fast food corners, etc. This will encourage local entrepreneurs to start business related to tourism. In short, the vast scope in West Bengal tourism is untapped and not marketed well to benefit the stakeholders of tourism industry in West Bengal . Hence, the research problem studied in this work is to test that if Marketed well West Bengal Tourism has tremendous potential.

For any product or service is to be sold, it is very important to market the service/product well. More important is how the service is advertised and marketed. With regard to Tourism Development in West Bengal , it is observed that often there is no information available or no signboards on highway to promote the nearby tourist destination in West Bengal .



The study is aimed to identify the factors commonly associated with West Bengal tourism, gauge the present tourism scenario and bottlenecks to suggest suitable marketing strategies for development of West Bengal tourism.

Objectives of the study

To evaluate marketing and promotion with regards to tourism industry in West Bengal using the feedback from the tourist on their experiences in the various tourist destinations in West Bengal along with the perception of the various stake holders of Tourism, thereby suggesting marketing strategies for the development of Tourism in West Bengal .

Research Design:

The type of research is empirical, based on exhaustive primary and secondary data. The research is descriptive as well as analytical in nature.

Descriptive Research: The researcher would use questionnaires and interview schedules to collect primary data from the stake holders in Tourism Industry and allied services that attract tourists towards the Tourist Centers in West Bengal. To find and analyze the various attributes and factors that attracts tourists to West Bengal.

Analytical Research: The researcher would also analyse the collected data statistically and logically to arrive at expected inferences for devising marketing strategies to promote West Bengal tourism.

The study is partly based on the primary data collected from 200 respondents. The primary data is collected through structured questionnaires with both open-ended as well as close-ended questions for Tourists. The researcher has collected secondary data from The Tourism

Ministry of West Bengal, research journals, magazines, newspapers, government agencies and publications, University bulletins, Government bulletins etc. Since the population of the respondents is quite large, a representative sample of each of the respondents has been selected by simple random sampling method so that each unit in the universe had an equal opportunity of being selected. This sample is thus free from bias.

The researcher has used appropriate statistical tools to analyze the data and to test the statements of hypotheses. The researcher has used both, descriptive and inferential statistics, in analyzing her study. T-test, ANOVA and Chi-square have been used to test the proposed hypothesis. The SPSS 19 version has been used to analyze the collected data.

H1 – There is no relationship between the “Online marketing” and “Tourism place”

Variables	F-value calculated	df	F-value	Remarks
Online marketing” and “Tourism place”	221.696	2	5.99	Significant at .05 level Null Hypotheses Not Accepted

Calculated value of F (221.696) is greater than the critical F value (5.99) Result: H1 not accepted at 95% level of confidence. **Conclusion: There is a relationship between Online marketing” and Tourism place”.**

H2 - There is no relationship between educational qualification and online service.

Variables	F-value calculated	df	F-value	Remarks
educational qualification and online service.	6.173	4	9.48	Significant at .05 level Null Hypotheses Not Accepted

Calculated value of F (6.173) is less than the critical F value (9.48) Result: H2 accepted at 95% level of confidence

Conclusion: There is no significant difference in the relation between the different educational qualification and online service. (as there is no statistical difference) but there is a marginal difference in the numbers. Most of the tourists (69.0%) have preferred online service.

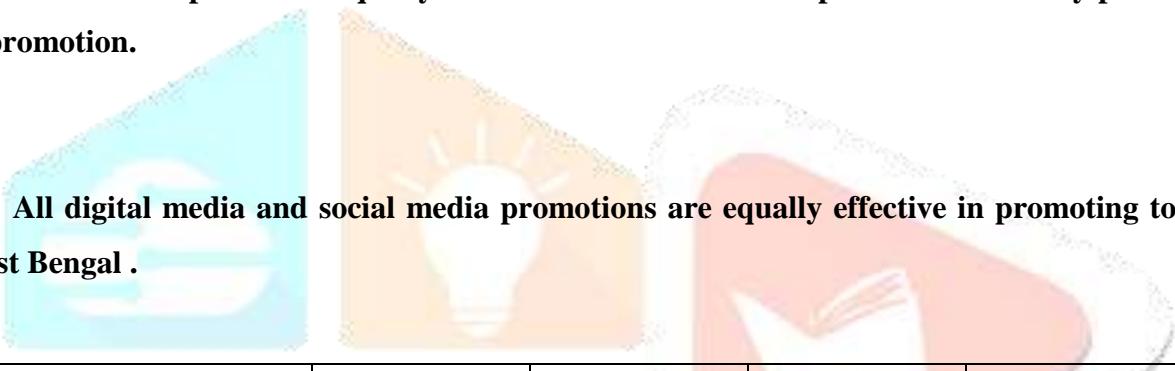
H3-All 4 Ps of digital Marketing are equally used to attract tourism business in**West Bengal .**

Variables	F-value calculated	df	F-value	Remarks
All 4 P's of Marketing & Attracting tourism business	338.2051	4	2.614849	Significant at .05 level Null Hypotheses Not Accepted

Calculated value of F (338.2051) is greater than the critical F value (2.614849)

Result: H3 not accepted at 95% level of confidence

Conclusion: All 4ps are not equally addressed. Price is most important followed by product, place & promotion.



H4: All digital media and social media promotions are equally effective in promoting tourism in West Bengal .

Variables	F-value calculated	df	F-value	Remarks
All Media Promotions (Television, Internet & website social media) & Effectiveness in promoting tourism	211.9524	4	2.379962	Significant at .05 level Null Hypotheses Not Accepted

Calculated value of F (211.9524) is greater than the critical F value (2.379962) Result: H4 not accepted at 95% level of confidence

Conclusion: All digital media for promotion are not equally effective. Internet and website is most effective, followed by Television and social media

Conclusion

As Technology is creating an interconnected world resulting in unprecedented levels of information flows, hence Technology is progressively evolving the way we identify and engage with potential visitors. Social media is super-charging word-of-mouth and the popularity and use of on-line advisory and review sites to inform travel decisions is increasingly prevalent and important. More specifically mobile technology is being used increasingly at all phases of travel (dreaming, researching, booking, experiencing and sharing). Technology is contributing to the creation of a much more informed traveller, due to the abundance of information. Web technology is fast changing travel destination selection, product decisions and booking channels. Tourism promotion should use a good promotional mix such as personal selling, advertisements in print media, electronic media, television etc.

Digital Marketing today is all about using the internet technologies to reach out to existing and newer audiences and engage with them. Today digital marketing has disrupted industries and changed the way businesses reached out to customers. The main difference between traditional and digital marketing is the latter's ability to track data about user behaviour and campaign performance in real-time. In the tourism industry, the disruption was felt few years ago and has transformed the way businesses reach out to users. For any business to be successful digitally in the tourism industry, the above mentioned six points- quality website, SEO, Email marketing, Presence on social media, content, mobile-friendly play a very crucial role.

Getting into the space of digital marketing seem to be daunting, but over a period of time it gets easier as you build your customers and be able to make future marketing decisions on feedback collected. As part of marketing strategy, tourism service providers need to focus on making their niche place in the virtual space with their website and partnering with e-commerce aggregators. They have to optimize search engines, enhance user experience and take on to social media, email marketing and content marketing. Tourist service providers have to instantly address the comments/issues posted on Tripadvisor and blogs. As the customers compare the information available on different e-commerce site with respective company website for authentication, an element of trust needs to be developed. They have to ensure interaction with the customers is clear. The personal information of the customer has to be kept confidential to maintain higher levels of integrity. Ensure the terms & conditions and the policies are clear without and ambiguity. The power of digital communication has to be oriented towards tourism service standardization, understand customer needs better and create impact on purchase decision leading to increase in direct sales via e-commerce. E-tailers have to develop consistency, longterm commitment and have complete knowledge of target audience and an element of creativity to stand unique in the fast changing market place. Use of new tools, techniques and technology has to focus on promoting contents faster and easier which aids not only in sales but also in building the brand.

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