

Role of Digital Marketing in Tourism Industry

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Abstract : With the outbreak of internet and various other technologies that helps to connect the business and customers effectively has raised the need for digitalization in every industry. The adaptation of digital mediums in marketing is felt as an indispensable need in present times. This paper highlights the needs and the role of digital marketing in the field of tourism. The paper also holds the reasons about why the need of digital mediums in marketing been felt like ever before in this century. The paper includes conclusions of different tourism strategies and their policies the government adapted with the intention to improve the tourism value of their state.

Keywords: Tourism, digital marketing, marketing strategies, social media, ICT.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is marketing of products and services with the help of internet, social media, mobile phones, search engines, television advertisement, and other channels. In other words, digital marketing is any form of marketing using electronic devices as a medium.

The tourism industry has been one of the very first industries that used digital marketing techniques to reach to the consumers. As this industry mainly markets experiences as their main object to attract customers, the adaptation of digital marketing has really been a boon. Social media plays a vital and important role in tourism marketing and helps the operators in providing the best possible services through the feedbacks and review they receive from customers.

In this era digital media are playing a very crucial role in each and every segment. Online portals like Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, etc. have become a great platform for consumers and business point of view. Cheaper digital marketing services, increased use of mobile phones and internet, high acceptance and effectiveness of social media are some of the handful reasons why the adaptation of digital marketing in tourism has been a blessing.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

India has its unique essence of culture and traditions right from 'the land of rising sun' to 'the incredible state of India' and from 'heaven on earth' to 'God's own country'. But in spite of such vast beauty and cultural value India will not be able to get the desired growth in tourism sector unless it has a strong base in promotional and marketing strategies. The significance and importance of marketing in tourism industry has been explained very well in by Iamsoo et.al. in his paper "The Role of Marketing on Tourism Industry" (2013). In his research he states that in today's era the lack of marketing is the main cause for the downfall of the tourism industry in that country. He strongly argues that marketing is very important that sales and production of a product in a developing country. He proves this by a case study of Iran and winds it up stating that despite of having a huge potential in tourism, the country's lack of attention towards marketing and promotion of the industry is the main reason why it could not achieve the desired goals. According to him, the tourism industry also plays a crucial role towards the development of a nation. Some of the welfare he mentioned are the economic growth and contribution to GDP on the nation and also high improvement in infrastructure facilities, transport, hospitals and many more.

Now there is a wide range of medium available for marketing of tourism which includes print newspapers, magazines, banners and also digital mediums like television, radio, mobile applications, internet etc. Gurneet Kaur (2017) studied the importance of digital marketing in tourism industry. He compares the differences between the traditional ways of marketing in tourism industry and the modern i.e. the digital ways of marketing. In his paper he gives a brief about what is digital marketing and its concepts. He also talks about the various characteristics involved in digital marketing and the importance to maintain these characteristics in order to cultivate a successful digital marketing campaign. He even analyzes the role of digital marketing in today's era and also how the internet marketing has changed the ways of the businesses to reach new customers and also how to maintain the existing ones.

While Kishore Prabhala, Prof. T. Umamheswara Rao (2017) studied the impact of digital marketing on travel and tourism industry in India. Their paper mainly speaks about the advancement of information technology in terms of servers and operating systems and its impression and pay-off in digitalization in marketing of tourism. They also speaks about the impact of digital marketing in the economy of the country. The paper mainly focuses on the penetration of the internet in various aspects of tourism and its influence in various sectors such as air line industry and many more. Along with appropriate statistics the paper also summarizes the differences between various aspects like the online and offline marketing and direct and world impact in tourism industry and various other particulars related to internet, mobile phones and tourism.

Similarly, Harshada Satghare, Madhuri Sawant (2018) studied the impact of internet marketing or online marketing and its strategies in Indian tourism industry. The paper analyzed the tourism policies of six different Indian states namely Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The states were selected based on various sampling and benchmark techniques and various factors like Foreign Tourists Arrival (FTA), Alexa global ranking, awards received and many more. From the research made, the paper concludes by summarizing different strategies used by different Indian states. It has been evident that the main strategies of the states analyzed were to maximize the utilization of the digital and social media for promotion and marketing, information distribution, improving services for tourists and stakeholders. In addition to this the DMO's of the states are also planning of virtual tours and online competition for increasing user engagement.

Meera Prathapan, Sajin Sahadevan, Dr. Zakkariya K.A (2018) studied the effectiveness of digital marketing through tourism websites using AIDA model. The paper is a comparative study of Kerala Government tourism websites with its competitors. The study was done to understand various digital promotional activities taken by the government and other organizations towards development of Kerala tourism. The study includes analysis done by various analytical softwares like Alexa and SEMrush. This paper reveals the importance of considering various performance particulars in AIDA such as bounce rate, average duration of visit, most visited sites, traffic rates, etc.

The strategic impact of internet on the tourism industry was studied by Dinitrios Buhalis, Marianna Zoge (2006). The paper focuses on the changes that were introduced with the integration of internet in tourism sector. These changes were studied using the Porter's model of industry analysis i.e. five forces analysis. The paper summarizes about how the internet has brought changes in the five forces and how it affected the suppliers, intermediaries and the end-consumers. They conclude with the benefits the consumers acquired with the emergence of internet in this sector. The bargaining power of the buyers increased drastically and also the opening of the market to the new entrants also increased. There has also been a change in the strategies used by the suppliers. It has been realized that for sustaining the competition in the market and to maintain the standards of the suppliers a focus on their core competencies and also exploitation of the technological opportunities should be considered to provide a value supported service in tourism industry.

In 2010, Dr. D. Mavoothu studied the use of social media as an important and relevant tool for the promotion and marketing tool for tourism industry. He deeply analyzes the contribution made by the social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and others in marketing tourism. His paper also includes various facts and figures of companies that used these social platforms for promotions and their success rates. The paper describes the definition of social media networking in detail. The research paper not only contains the proof why these social media can be an effective tool in marketing but also gives brief examples on successful companies and tourism boards that incorporated these social platforms as their major marketing aid.

The very first step towards digitalization in tourism industry was due to the introduction of ICT. It is ICT that the sow seeds of digital marketing in tourism industry. Anand Bethapudi (2013) studied the role of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and its impact in tourism industry. The paper effectively throws light on the gaps between the ICT and the current tourism way of business. It also suggests measures and steps to eliminate the gap between tourism business and ICT. For better and successful business the key is to integrate and incorporate ICT into it. The paper also talks about how Indian tourism should work to penetrate into ICT which is essential for its success.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

A quantitative approach has been adopted for the fulfillment of the objectives. The following are the objectives considered for the study.

1. To understand tourism industry in detail and all the aspects related to it.
2. To study and analyze the role of marketing in tourism industry.
3. To study and analyze the growth of digital marketing in tourism industry and its development.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The research paper is purely based on secondary data collected from various sources like online journals, research papers, online forums, news articles, reports and other online databases. This paper will expose the impact of marketing in digital form in the tourism industry. The strategies used by government to promote various types of tourism have been studied in detail in this paper. According to the various data collected from numerous sources a clear analysis has been drawn on the impact of digital marketing in tourism industry and its advantages and development.

Data Collection – Secondary

Research Strategy – Case Study

Research Approach – Deductive

V. TOURISM AND MARKETING

India has a vast diversity and a vast variety of cultural heritage right from the 'heaven on earth' to 'God's own country'. Each and every state of India has its own beliefs, tradition and values. Not only the vast heritage and culture but India also has a huge diversity in terms of flora and fauna. And this is the main reason why India is always standing steady in the tourism sector. It is a common fact that people always gets fascinated and curious about what they see more frequently, and this is the main reason why promotion and marketing plays a major role in tourism industry. It is through these promotional activities that the beauty and culture of India is spread over millions of people across the globe.

"Tourism is accepted as the potent engine for inclusive social economic progress at universal level through its forward and backward linkages and ability to create employment in the economy." It has a huge potential to create approximately 90 jobs per Rs. 10 Lakhs of investment. The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) of the World Economic Forum has ranked India 52nd from 141 countries in 2015.

Tourism can be of many types as people travel for numerous reasons. People travel for leisure, treatment, holidays, conferences, business trips and many more. Tourism can be both domestic and global i.e. intra-national or inter-national, depending upon the source and destination of the travel. International tourism plays a crucial and important role in developing the economy of the country.

Thickening of tourism also blooms the economy of the country and in-turn increases employment and infrastructure. Improvement and development in tourism also enhances communication networks, good infrastructure, hotels, roads, banks, health care, security, etc. And all this can be achieved with improvement in tourism which can only be brought about by marketing and promotion.

'Incredible India' and 'Athithi Devo Bhava' are some of the tourist promotional activities raised by the government of India with the primary objective of providing a unique identity to the country. Now a days various state promotional activities are also growing with the same aim of providing a unique identity in terms of their culture, value and traditions. So therefore even though a state or a region is fully developed in every aspect of tourism but if it lacks in marketing and promotional call and schemes then

that will be the cardinal reason for the region not been able to reach the optimum levels. According to the annual report by Ministry of Tourism, India the lack of marketing and indecorous strategies of marketing has become a barrier in the development of tourism industry to the fullest in India.

VI. DIGITAL MARKETING

Now, after understanding the importance of marketing in tourism it is time to know about different medium used for marketing tourism. A wide variety of channels are available in marketing in today's era, right from print media like newspaper, magazines, banners, etc. to electronic media including television, radio, internet, online platforms, social media. The revolution of internet and world wide web not only enhanced the operations of marketing but also has made in cheaper and easier. Now a person from anywhere in the worlds can see, plan and learn about tourist's destinations in India. India has been recognized as first among the Asian countries to promote tourism at an international platform.

Tourism industry holds pride as one of the very first industries to practice and adapt digital marketing. Now, what is digital marketing? From reviewing and understanding some of the literatures, digital marketing may be understood as;

- “Digital marketing encompasses all marketing efforts that use an electronic device or the internet. Businesses leverage digital channels such as search engines, social media, email, and other websites to connect with current and prospective customers.”(blog.hubspot.com)
- “Internet marketing and online advertising, also called e-marketing, web marketing, online marketing, or e-marketing, is the advertising of products and services over the Internet.” (Ruzic, D. 2003)
- “The application of the Internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives.” (Chaffey, 2012)
- “Internet marketing is the use of the Internet and other digital technologies with traditional methods in order to achieve marketing goals. Marketing using electronic media such as the web, email, interactive TV, IPTV and wireless media in conjunction with digital data about customer's characteristics & behaviors.” (Chaffey, D., Ellis-Chadwick, F., Mayer, R., Johnston, K. 2009).
- “Internet Marketing (also known as e-Marketing, Web Marketing, or Digital Marketing) is an all-inclusive term for marketing products and/or services online – and like many all-inclusive terms, internet marketing means different things to different people.” (Ward, 2016)
- “Digital marketing, the promotion of products or brands via one or more forms of electronic media, differs from traditional marketing in that it uses channels and methods that enable an organization to analyze marketing campaigns and understand what is working and what isn't – typically in real time.” (sas.com)
- Chaffey, Chadwick, Johnston, & Mayer (2015) defined internet marketing as “the application of internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives.”

VII. TOURISM AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Tourism is a service based industry, it has gone hand-in-hand with technology and has unleashed its true potential with latest developments. Technology has not only emerged as an integral part of tourism but also changed the way travel is planned and gave it altogether a new dimension. With the birth of internet, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), mobile phones, Web 2.0, social media altered the strategies, planning and operations of tourism marketing. The success of digital marketing in tourism is mainly because it allows to track the user behavior and to analyze the performance of campaign in real-time.

“The tourism department of India spends about Rs.4 Crore everyday on media channels like BBC, Discovery, CNN, National Geographic Travel & living and also on national channels like Sony, Zee TV etc.”

According to a study by web analytics firm comScore, about 14 million people visits travel sites from their home and work locations in 2010, this represents about 37 percent on the country's total online population. It has also been found out that Indian Railways has been the most visited travel site with about 7.7 million visitors.

A study has been made to analyze and understand the marketing strategies and promotional plans of different states on India. Six different states were considered for the study namely Kerala, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat. After an in-depth review, it has been prominent that all the states are mostly focusing to develop a unique selling factor and to market it to the globe by using ways of digitalization. Action plans of the state focused on improving use of TV and internet ads, online presence, developing mobile applications, strong use of social networking tools, innovative branding, etc. It has also been observed that there has been a strong rise in mobile based services and ICT for promotions.

The main reasons why digital marketing methods are building a strong base in tourism industry as it is inexpensive, convenient, and does not require a great planning. Soone benefits of digital marketing in tourism industry are;

a. Cost Efficiency

The digital marketing has successfully proved to be more cost-efficient that other traditional ways of marketing. One of the major segments of digital marketing is social media. According to Razzaque, 2008, the two major driving factors of social networks as successful marketing tools are cost efficiency and its potential in pulling up new customers. Mahindra Homestays has adapted Facebook as one of its major marketing tool as their target at young, mobile and evolved tourists. An another excellent example of social media as a victorious tourism marketing tool can be seen in the case of ‘TheAdventureTeam.co.uk.’, a tourism business that used social media as their main marketing instrument and their revenue exceed their expectations in a

very short time. Now, over 60 percent of their business directly comes from social media and they are also looking forward to invest more on such platforms as it has proved to be more cost effective and effectively increasing their business.

b. Credibility and Authenticity

Tourism is a unique industry that exclusively markets through the experiences. For this kind of marketing digital mediums has been a boon. With the emergence of internet, Web 2.0, ICT and social media people can write and share their own authentic experiences in traveling. Due to sharing and availability of such credible and authentic information tourists can now effectively decide where they should travel, how they should travel and to which organization to seek for help. Such true information has been a great blessing to the tourism and travel industry and also to the tourists to understand and explore destinations.

c. Interactions

“Digitally recorded and shared experiences can directly impact the marketing efforts” Evans (2009). With internet marketing platforms people can share their insights, experiences, opinions in many forms like text, images, and videos. The user’s comments and ratings are considered and studied by other tourists before their travel. These interactions between travelers help them to get a clear perception of their tour at their planning stage. These interactions through digital medias are used as a significant marketing tool to promote tourism.

d. Conversion

The information and experiences shared by tourists through digital media generate curiosity and demand among travelers towards a destination. Studies show that about 60 percent of people researching online will travel in reality. Hence these social media have high conversion ability. These shared inputs reach and expands to area and people more than any awareness campaigns can. Hence tourism industry should invest appreciable time and resources in digital mediums to promote and to take tourism to its true potential.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world. It is now crystal clear that digital marketing plays an inevitable role in tourism marketing in this century. India being such a vast and diversified nation in terms of traditions, culture and ancient destinations there are indefinable means of scope to flourish in tourism and travel sector. To achieve this in India the government and non-governmental organizations should focus on using and integrate with digital mediums of marketing. The Ministry of Tourism (MoT, GoI 2013) stresses also on the prominence of digital marketing in tourism, and also declared digitalization as a universal remedy to attract and influence travelers to India. Digital media and tourism should go hand-in-hand to push Indian tourism to its fullest and truest knack.

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