

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN PROMOTING PAKISTANI TOURISM: INSIGHTS FOR DESTINATION MARKETING

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ABSTRACT

This research explores digital marketing's role in boosting Pakistani tourism through social media and destination marketing. By showcasing Pakistan's natural beauty and cultural heritage via compelling content, the study suggests social media can significantly promote tourism. Utilizing a sample of 325 internet users, it examines factors like e-word of mouth and influencer marketing's impact on tourism, finding mostly positive effects. The study, valuable for marketing professionals and researchers, highlights the potential for further exploration in digital tourism promotion strategies.

Keywords: Tourism Promotion, Marketing, Digital Marketing, e-WOM Marketing, Influencer/Affiliate Marketing, Viral Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Internet Credibility.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction provides an in-depth overview of the pivotal role of marketing in achieving business objectives, particularly within the tourism industry, which stands to gain significantly from targeted marketing strategies. It outlines the necessity of understanding market needs, trends, and effective promotional tools in destination marketing, highlighting the transformative impact of digital platforms in sharing travel experiences and engaging audiences. The evolution of networking and information technology is emphasized as a revolution in the tourism sector, enabling travelers to independently plan and manage their trips, thereby shifting control away from traditional tour promoters.

The overview of Pakistan's tourism industry acknowledges its vast potential, underscored by significant contributions to the country's GDP and employment. Despite challenges such as political unrest, efforts are being made to revitalize interest in Pakistan as a prime tourist destination, supported by international recognition of its natural beauty and hospitality.

The scope of the study aims to explore the effectiveness of digital marketing in elevating Pakistan's tourism industry on both national and international levels.

It seeks to investigate the most impactful digital marketing platforms and strategies to educate and inspire potential travelers, thereby enhancing Pakistan's brand image and reputation within the tourism sector.

The research underscores the tourism sector's role in generating indirect income, fostering economic growth, and contributing to local development through a variety of tourist destinations and activities available in Pakistan. It aims to highlight the transformative and growth-inducing potential of digital marketing in global tourism, with a particular focus on its application in promoting Pakistani tourism destinations.

Addressing the gap in research regarding digital marketing practices for tourism promotion in Pakistan, the study aims to offer valuable insights into effective tactics that can bolster the tourism industry. It integrates existing literature on tourism destination marketing to provide a comprehensive understanding of marketing methods and their impact on tourism promotion, paving the way for future research in this crucial area.

Statement of Problem

The main objective of this study is to explore and evaluate how digital marketing impacts the expansion of tourism in Pakistan. It aims to analyze different digital marketing approaches and platforms that could efficiently highlight Pakistan's tourism offerings. Additionally, the research seeks to pinpoint and suggest the most suitable and impactful strategies for promoting tourism within the country. Despite Pakistan's rich variety of landscapes, cultural heritage, and historical sites, which offer significant potential for economic growth and development, the tourism industry faces challenges in effectively marketing these attractions to both local and international tourists

Objectives of Research

The following are the study's primary goals:

1. Look at the role of electronic word of mouth in tourism promotion.
2. Determine the function of influencer/affiliate marketing in the promotion of tourism.
3. To evaluate the advantages of viral marketing in promoting tourism.
4. To assess the potential of social media platforms for promoting/demonstrating tourism.
5. To assess the trustworthiness of tourism-related information on social media sites.
6. To identify the limitations of digital tourism promotion.

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed by this project:

1. What is the impact of e-word of mouth in influencing tourists' travel decisions and destination choices in the context of Pakistani tourism?

2. How do influencer/affiliate marketing strategies contribute to the visibility and popularity of Pakistani tourism destinations among potential travellers?
3. What are the key benefits and drawbacks of viral marketing campaigns in promoting Pakistani tourism, and how do they influence tourists' perceptions and behaviors?
4. To what extent do social media platforms play a significant role in positively or negatively affecting the image and perception of Pakistani tourism destinations among domestic and international tourists?
5. How credible and reliable is the information shared on social media platforms regarding Pakistani tourism, and how does it impact tourists' decision-making processes?
6. What are the main challenges and limitations faced by destination marketers in Pakistan when utilizing digital marketing methods to promote tourism, and how can these constraints be addressed effectively?

Hypothesis

The purpose of this study is to test the following theories:

- H¹:** E-word of mouth marketing significantly influences tourists' decisions and positively impacts the promotion of tourism in Pakistan, as travelers rely on recommendations and reviews from friends, family, and online communities to make travel-related choices.
- H²:** Influencer/affiliate marketing is important for boosting tourism in Pakistan because prominent individuals and affiliate relationships can successfully reach and engage a large audience, sparking interest in the country's tourist hotspots.
- H³:** Viral marketing efforts play an important role in growing tourism in Pakistan since engaging and shareable content has the ability to spread quickly across digital channels, drawing the attention of potential tourists.
- H⁴:** The role of social media marketing It plays an important role in boosting Pakistani tourism since it provides an excellent platform for destination marketing, exhibiting the country's unique attractions, and communicating with guests in real time.
- H⁵:** In the course of digital media marketing Although digital platforms are beneficial in promoting tourism, there may be credibility difficulties regarding the authenticity and reliability of information posted on them, potentially impacting tourists' decision-making process.
- H⁶:** The limitations and Limited internet connection, digital literacy constraints, and technological infrastructural limitations may have an impact on the expansion of tourism promotion in Pakistan, resulting in slower progress in reaching potential tourists.

Definitions of the key terms

Tourism Promotion

The practice of spreading information and updates about destinations to attract visitors. It involves strategic efforts to encourage people to visit and discover various locations. (Hasan, 2015).

Marketing

A comprehensive approach involving processes and strategies aimed at creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging valuable offerings to customers, stakeholders, and the broader community (Twin, 2020).

Digital Marketing

The use of electronic channels and digital platforms, including social media, websites, emails, and apps, for advertising and promotion activities. (Alexander, 2020).

e-WOM Marketing (Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing)

Electronic Word of Mouth Marketing involves individuals sharing their opinions and experiences about services or destinations online, influencing potential visitors. (Kremers, 2012).

Influencer/Affiliate Marketing

Utilizes individuals with significant online followings (influencers) or affiliates (who earn commissions for driving traffic or sales) to promote tourism experiences (Steffens, 2017).

Viral Marketing

A strategy aimed at creating content that is engaging and shareable, facilitating rapid information spread akin to a viral process, to increase brand awareness (Kagan, 2019).

Social Media Marketing

The use of social media platforms to market, engage with the audience, increase web traffic, improve brand visibility, and enhance revenue for tourism entities (Kenton, 2018).

Credibility of Information on the Internet

Assessing the reliability and trustworthiness of online information through platform, site, and content evaluation (Rieh & Danielson, 2008).

Delimitations of Research

The research faces limitations in data accessibility and the feasibility of conducting extensive fieldwork, leading to reliance on a smaller data sample size. To maintain research validity, it will focus on specific age groups, excluding children and the elderly, and largely employ online platforms for data collection. This method might bias the results towards internet-savvy individuals, potentially missing insights from those with limited online engagement. The study will primarily target youth and adults, potentially omitting valuable perspectives from teenagers and seniors.

Due to budgetary and time constraints, the research will predominantly utilize quantitative methods, analyzing numerical data, which may overlook nuanced qualitative insights. The broad scope of digital marketing's impact on Pakistani

tourism necessitates a selective examination of variables, possibly not encompassing all relevant factors and leaving gaps for future research.

The novelty of exploring digital marketing in the context of Pakistani tourism might encounter a limited availability of literature, constraining the study to a smaller range of sources. Despite these limitations, the research aims to shed light on digital marketing's role in enhancing Pakistani tourism, contributing to knowledge while recognizing areas for further in-depth exploration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Promotion:

Tourism, as an activity of spending time away from home for leisure, relaxation, exploration, and enjoyment by utilizing commercial facilities, plays a significant role in the global economy (Walton, 2018). It has become a crucial revenue generator for developed and developing countries alike. However, despite its potential, the literature on tourism, especially in the context of Pakistan, remains limited and scarce (Niazi, Qazi, & Basit, 2019).

Tourism can be seen as a trade of imports and exports, where imports refer to the expenses incurred by residents of a country when traveling abroad, while exports denote the expenditures made by foreign tourists within the host country (Lew, 2011). In the modern world, the tourism industry is dynamic and promising, contributing not only to foreign currency earnings but also showcasing the nation's culture and diversity. To capitalize on its tourism potential, Pakistan needs to adopt a conscious approach, focusing on developing various offerings and refining marketing strategies (Tuhin & Majumder, 2011).

Research on the interaction between financial development and the growth of the tourism industry in Turkey revealed a strong correlation between the two. Turkey emerged as a desirable tourism destination with a well-designed financial system, and the study identified a significant and long-term relationship between tourism and financial growth (Katircioglu, Katircioglu, & Altinay, 2018). Similar research conducted in Pakistan explored the relationship between oil prices, inflation, exchange rates, and tourism demand, and identified a long-term asymmetric relationship. The study suggested that institutional quality plays a crucial role in shaping the tourism market in the long run (Meo, Chowdhury, Shaikh, Ali, & Sheikh, 2018).

Pakistan's abundant natural scenic beauty offers diverse tourism opportunities, and it has been recognized as a magical tourist destination (Hyun-ju, 2017). However, the full potential of the tourism sector remains untapped due to the lack of effective strategies, mismanagement, and other challenges hindering its contribution to Pakistan's economic growth (Ahmed, Ilyas, Tariq, & Zafar, 2017). The unregulated influx of tourism traffic and the absence of carrying capacity calculations for major tourist destinations necessitate the development of a comprehensive tourism plan to achieve sustainable growth in these areas (Ahmed & Mahmood, 2018).

Promotion, as an essential element of the marketing mix, plays a crucial role in the tourism industry, aiming to educate, inspire, motivate, and inform customers about brands or offerings (Chiguvi, Madondo, & Tadu, 2019). Cultural festivals and local traditions can be effective tourism marketing strategies, benefiting both locals and companies in the host country.

Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has evolved into an integral component of modern businesses, leveraging internet technology to reach and engage people all over the world. Traditional methods of organization growth were vital prior to the emergence of digital marketing. However, with the advent of the Internet, new marketing tactics evolved, opening up a plethora of opportunities to engage target audiences (Kaur, 2017).

Consumers can compare services from many companies all over the world with the touch of a button (Kaur, 2017). This shift in the travel industry has created new opportunities for destination marketing, allowing tourism groups to communicate directly with potential visitors via digital channels.

Wireless technology have paved the way for the broad adoption of social media sites and e-word of mouth (e-WOM) practices, which are critical components of digital marketing. These digital tools have become an integral part of our daily lives, enabling global connectivity and serving as a modern mode of communication for individuals worldwide (Alghizzawi et al., 2018).

The impact of high global competitiveness brought on by digital technologies has been felt across numerous industries, including marketing. These variables have significantly influenced consumer behavior and the mindset of travelers, altering traditional paradigms of selling and advertising (Mahmoud, 2019). With digital marketing at the forefront, destination marketing has become more dynamic and interactive, requiring businesses to adapt and implement innovative strategies to stand out in the highly competitive digital landscape.

e-Word of Mouth Marketing

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) refers to the process of sharing information electronically among users. Its impact on customer satisfaction plays a vital role in determining the overall value of a company. Positive e-WOM can slowly build consumer trust and influence their decision-making process (Wu & Wang, 2011).

Online user feedback has become a valuable source of knowledge for potential customers before making a purchase. Elements such as the valence of analysis and type of argumentation contribute to the credibility of e-WOM messages (Willemsen, Neijens, Bronner, & Ridder, 2011).

The persuasiveness of e-WOM messages is influenced by the individual's level of involvement and the reputation of the message source. Different types of e-WOM appeal can have varying effects on consumers (Wu & Wang, 2011).

In the realm of tourism, word-of-mouth from friends, family, and other travelers is a prominent source of information for decision-making (Bieger & Laesser, 2004). Travelers tend to rely on e-WOM, especially for unfamiliar destinations, where experiences of others become crucial in forming perceptions (Murphy, Mascardo, & Benckendorff, 2007). Positive word-of-mouth has proven to be an effective promotional tool widely utilized by the tourism industry to enhance destination reputation and attract more visitors (Lai, Hitchcock, Lu, & Liu, 2018).

The digital age, characterized by technological advancements, has transformed communication from face-to-face interactions to cyberspace. E-WOM, as one dimension of cyberspace, plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and decision-making processes (Jeong & Jang, 2011) (Senecal & Nantel, 2004).

E-WOM has become widespread due to the extensive use of the internet and social media. Potential travelers now seek information online, including reviews, blogs, vlogs, and other forms of e-WOM, to gather insights about their destination (Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004).

E-WOM can be categorized into personal and industrial forms, further divided into one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many communications. One-to-one communication occurs between individuals sharing their experiences with familiar acquaintances. One-to-many communication involves sharing information through online reviews, personal blogs, and social media platforms, while many-to-many communication takes place on websites and video streaming platforms, shaping opinions and influencing travel choices (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008) (Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2018) (Chen, Larry, & Firth, 2014) (Park & Allen, 2013).

Online user-generated reviews, particularly on platforms like TripAdvisor, have emerged as crucial factors in tourists' decision-making process (Chen & Xie, 2008). Websites like TripAdvisor play a significant role in assisting consumers in selecting their destinations, providing valuable insights through user-generated reviews (Yan, Zhou, & Wu, 2018).

Influencer/Affiliate Marketing

Influencer marketing, when effectively executed, creates a two-way communication opportunity and serves as a secondary social network tactic aligning authentic communication with marketing messages (Vodák, Novysedlák, Čakanová, & Pekár, 2019).

Endorser-destination correlation and endorser-consumer congruence play a crucial role in influencer marketing. Brands must carefully select influencers who align with their destination appeal. However, there is a potential risk when endorsers have negative publicity or controversies, impacting the destination's reputation. Marketers must have backup strategies if the alignment becomes impossible (Pratt & Rinka, 2018).

Influencer/affiliate marketing has emerged as a significant modern approach in marketing, leveraging the influence of individuals, products, or events

(Brown & Hayes, 2008). With consumers actively sharing their opinions online and influencing others, businesses recognize the power of influencers in shaping opinions (Pang & Lee, 2008).

The psychology of influencing rests on six principles: consistency, liking, reciprocity, authority, social proof, and scarcity. These principles tap into individuals' automatic behaviors and understanding to influence their decision-making process (Cialdini, 2009).

In today's digital landscape, companies are increasingly turning to influencers to reach their target audiences effectively, bypassing ad blockers, and establishing trust through the influence of relatable individuals. The personal connection influencers build with their followers enhances the credibility of the brand (Hall, 2016).

Social media influencers have become key marketing tools, shaping consumer beliefs and driving future behavior. The impact of influencers is evident in media and consumer perception (Booth & Matic, 2011).

Influencer marketing capitalizes on the large followings of influencers, effectively turning their followers into brand ambassadors. Consumers trust influencers' recommendations, finding their messages credible and persuasive (Talaverna, 2015).

The use of influencers has proven to be highly beneficial for companies, with influencer marketing yielding 11 times higher returns on investment compared to conventional ads (Kirkpatrick, 2016).

Top reasons for using influencer marketing include enhancing brand support, increasing brand awareness, reaching new target markets, growing the brand's share of voice, and driving revenue growth (Nanji, 2017).

Influencer marketing has become an indispensable component of digital marketing for many brands. In 2016, 60% of brands used social influencers to reach new or challenging consumer segments in promotional campaigns (Krasniak, 2016).

The growth potential of influencer marketing is substantial, with projections estimating a total spending between US\$10 billion and US\$15 billion in the coming years (Morin, 2017). Over a third of marketers now allocate more than \$500,000 annually to influencer marketing (Izea, 2017).

In tourism marketing, influencer endorsements have proven beneficial. Celebrity endorsements capture public attention, enhance credibility, increase ad recall, boost brand recognition, and establish synergies between the product brand and the personal brand. Influencer endorsements significantly impact destination reputation and awareness in tourism advertising (Glover, 2009). Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of typical celebrity endorsements on destination reputation (McCartney & Pinto, 2014; Veen & Song, 2014; Yen & Teng, 2015).

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing in the tourism and hospitality sector has the potential to create a positive chain reaction among happy and satisfied tourists, leading to increased future tourist engagement. Utilizing strategies such as pass-along, user-controlled databases, incognito mood, and incentivized viral databases, businesses can effectively leverage social networks for viral marketing (Daif & Elsayed, 2019).

The distribution of tourist information in Jordan is significantly facilitated by viral online tourism promotion. For successful information dissemination, content should be easily accessible, quickly understood, presented informatively, concise, and creatively engaging. Viral marketing campaigns not only encourage creativity but also provide valuable insights into current tourism offerings (Alkharabsheh, ALSarayreh, Rumman, & Farajat, 2011).

Viral marketing, as termed by Steve Jurvertson and Tim Draper, involves spreading ad emails from existing users to other users using platforms like Hotmail, rapidly infecting readers with the advertised content (Czepiec, Bryant, Roxas, & Whitson, 2012). Viral marketing harnesses social networks, allowing people to share experiences of products or services, significantly impacting brand referrals (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

Viral marketing, as a branch of internet marketing, rapidly spreads messages, generating awareness, curiosity, interest, and influencing tourists' decisions (Claudia, Alexandra, & Ionut, 2011). It not only enhances brand promotion and awareness but also drives sales (Kirby & Mardsen, 2005). Unlike spam emails, viral marketing content encourages users to share experiences with friends, generating positive word of mouth for the product or service (Rathore, Joshi, & Ilavarasan, 2017).

Various types of viral marketing strategies have been identified, including pass-along, incentivized viral, incognito mood, and user-controlled databases. These strategies allow messages to be easily spread, leading to viral campaigns (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry, & Raman, 2005; Mohsen & Zahra, 2013; Yadav, Agarwal, & Singh, 2014).

While viral promotion can have a positive impact on tourist organizations, potential detrimental consequences must be considered (Getz, 2008). To create an effective viral marketing campaign, businesses should offer free goods or services, ensure easy transferability of content, scale campaigns from small to large, leverage human motivations, utilize existing contact networks, and benefit from other tools and platforms (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012; Mejía-Trejo, Sanchez-Gutierrez, & Vazquez-Avila, 2012).

Social Media

Social media refers to interactive platforms, forums, and networks that connect people and allow them to exchange content, ideas, and experiences. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become significant for personal and business use. In the tourism industry, social media has a profound impact, with users relying on these platforms to plan their trips, share personal experiences, seek travel information, and access customer support (Mir, 2017).

Social media facilitates the creation and sharing of content among virtual communities, enabling travelers to find updates about their future tours and share their experiences through comments, ratings, and photographs (Aftab, Khan, & Iqbal, 2019). Participation, collaboration, culture, transparency, and networking are key aspects of social media networks (Sihombing, 2017).

Social media platforms play a crucial role in brand co-creation, challenging advertisers to adapt to a new landscape where products gain recognition through social network discussions rather than just official marketing messages (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Social media democratizes media output, allowing consumers to create and distribute content without relying solely on advertisers (Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Consequently, social media's impact on businesses is revolutionary and sociological (Pitt, Berthon, Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012).

Social media serves as a communication tool among social actors, enabling storytelling, versatility, and performance as a means of influencing others (Foucault, 1977; Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni, & Pauwels, 2013). It has evolved from a medium of social interaction into a powerful marketing tool for corporations, promoting a social transformation beyond mere technological development (Verissimo & Tiago, 2014). The rise of mobile devices like tablets and smartphones has further interconnected the offline and online worlds (Adams, 2011).

Unlike traditional marketing models, social media interactions occur outside the direct control of organizations, allowing customers to reshape brand perceptions based on their personal views (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kohli, Suri, & Kapoor, 2014). Tourism and travel discussions have become popular topics on social media platforms, providing a convenient outlet for sharing vacation experiences (Millie, 2014).

Through online travel and tourism services available on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, hotels and airlines can predict customer buying behavior and consider demographic profiles (Rekom, Teunissen, & Frank, 1999; Bedard, 2000; Zafiropoulos, Vasiliki, & Antoniadis, 2015). Electronic social media shopping apps enable shoppers to save time by accessing travel and tourism services directly online (Marcussen, 2001; Christou & Avdimiotis, 2004; Chatzigeorgiou, 2017).

Credibility of Information on Social Media for Tourists

Credibility in the context of social media involves several essential aspects, including expertise, honesty, accuracy, trustworthiness, reputation, group association, and equity, which are critical for establishing and enhancing credibility (Chiguvu, Madondo, & Tadu, 2019).

Customers tend to trust and accept the opinions, behaviors, and actions of promoters who share similar interests, morals, and attributes (Schouten, Janssen, & Verspaget, 2020). In Pakistan, social media has not only revolutionized social interaction but also facilitated business activities (Zulqarnain & Hassan, 2016).

In the digital information age, credibility is a blend of medium and source credibility.

The credibility of a medium is assessed based on factors like factualness, motivations, respect for privacy, concern for the community, and trustworthiness (Kiousis, 2001). For digital information available through online sources, credibility markers include trustworthiness, bias, believability, accuracy, and completeness (Flanagin & Metzger, 2000).

A study evaluating Chinese Millennials' perception of credibility regarding traditional and social media found that print media appeared more reliable for national and local news, but social media usage was significantly higher (Cook, 2013).

The credibility of influencers is crucial in encouraging people to engage in leisure tourism and select their next destination. The influencer's credibility is evaluated based on identity verification, social media presence, and perceived similarity (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005; Gräve, 2017). Identification with influencers can be driven by wishful identification, where individuals desire to be like the influencer (Kamins, Brand, Hoeke, & Moe, 1989).

Endorser credibility, characterized by trustworthiness and competence, plays a vital role in advertising effectiveness (Sternthal, Phillips, & Dholakia, 1978; Ohanian, 1991). Customers tend to positively judge brands endorsed by trustworthy individuals with relevant knowledge or abilities (Erdogan, 1999; Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016).

Hindrances of Marketing Pakistani Tourism

The promotion and growth of Pakistani tourism face several hindrances, stemming from both internal and external factors. The lack of trust in the private sector by the Ministry and inadequate policy enforcement have hindered the sector's substantial growth (Ahmad, 2016). To attract foreign tourists, Pakistani embassies should appoint qualified personnel for travel activities and organize events like photography shows, documentary screenings, seminars, and cultural activities in various countries to showcase Pakistan's environment, history, and cultural heritage (Ahmad, 2016).

Tourism plays a crucial role in developing a modern economy, generating national revenue, employment, and foreign exchange earnings (Lyons, Young, Hanley, & Stolk, 2016; Meo, Chowdhury, Shaikh, Ali, & Sheikh, 2018). However, despite its potential, the tourism sector in Pakistan has been neglected (Ahmed, Nawaz, & Qazi, 2011). Baloch and Rehman (2015) highlighted the need for improvements in visa policies, infrastructure, and religious and historical site relocation strategies to attract tourists from foreign countries. The deficiency of resources and community knowledge is a significant barrier to tourism development in many countries (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Aref, Redzuan, Emby, & Gill, 2009).

In Pakistan, terrorism and violence have adversely impacted tourism (Henderson, Foo, Lim, & Yip, 2010; Sofield, 2006). Safety and security are crucial for promoting tourism as tourists avoid destinations with a history of insurgency (Chen & Noriega, 2004; Seddighi, Nuttall, & Theocharous, 2001). While the situation has improved, it remains a fundamental hindrance for tourism promotion in Pakistan (Raza & Jawaaid, 2013).

Other hindrances for promoting tourism in Pakistan include the absence of an active federal tourism body, low priority given to tourism on the government's agenda, difficulties in obtaining visas, lack of interdepartmental liaison, limited investment from the private sector, and absence of credible tourism boards (Baloch & Rehman, 2015). The negative overall image due to historical unrest and insurgency, poor health facilities, lack of unbiased regulatory bodies, and underdeveloped tourism infrastructure are also major barriers to tourism growth (World Tourism Organization, 2021).

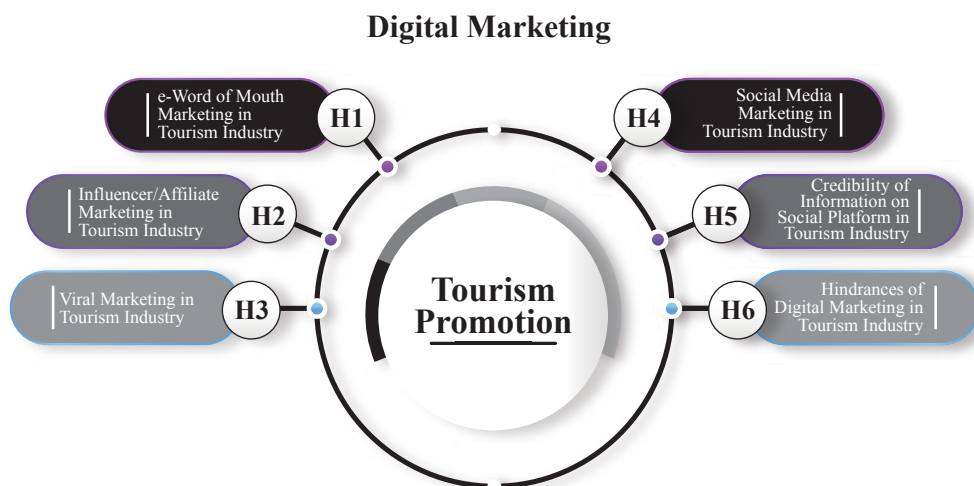
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study investigates digital marketing's impact on promoting tourism in Pakistan, encompassing a diverse sample from major cities and international tourists to ensure comprehensive insights. Utilizing a sample of 325 participants, chosen through non-probability sampling due to constraints, it spans various demographics, including age, gender, occupation, and income, focusing on those engaged with travel, whether as professionals or tourists. The research employs an explanatory design and a quantitative approach, starting from literature review to hypothesis testing using questionnaires and statistical analyses like Pearson Correlation, Linear Regression, and Cronbach's Alpha. Targeting individuals related to tourism, the study excludes the very young and old, prioritizing internet-savvy respondents to understand digital marketing's role in tourism. The methodology, rooted in positivism, aims to provide actionable insights to enhance Pakistan's tourism through digital platforms, substantiated by structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS to validate the findings.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Independent variables - (IV)

Dependent variable - (DV)



DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the data analysis and results of the study on "The Role of Digital Marketing in Promoting Pakistani Tourism: Insights for Destination Marketing." The data was collected from 325 individuals of different ages, genders, occupations, and qualification levels who frequently travel and support domestic tourism in Pakistan. Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to collect the data through domestic travel agencies and tourists. The reliability of the data collection instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, and Pearson's correlation and regression analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Reliability Testing

The Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to assess the reliability of the data collection instrument. All variables showed satisfactory results, with values greater than 0.5, indicating high reliability.

Table 1: Reliability of Collected Data

Variables	Items	Cronbach Alpha Values
e-Word of Mouth Marketing	3	0.785
Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing	3	0.803
Viral Digital Marketing	3	0.639
Social Media in Digital Marketing	4	0.744
Credibility of Information on Digital Marketing	3	0.565
Hindrances of Digital Marketing	3	0.559
Tourism Promotion	3	0.849
All Variables	22	0.706

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the variables. Strong positive correlations were found between most of the independent variables and tourism promotion.

Demographics of Respondents Table 2: Demographics - Gender

Gender					
Valid		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Female	140	43.1	43.1	43.1
	Male	185	56.9	56.9	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

According to the data gathered from 325 consumers, 185 of them are men and 140 are women.

Table 3: Demographics - Age

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-25	50	15.4	15.4	15.4
	25-35	145	44.6	44.6	60.0
	35-45	120	36.9	36.9	96.9
	45-55	10	3.1	3.1	100.0
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

The research data was gathered from 325 persons, of which 50 were in the 15–25 age group, 145 in the 25–35 age group, 120 in the 35–45 age group, and 10 in the 45–55 age group.

Table 4: Demographics – Education

Qualification					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid					
	Undergraduate	20	6.2	6.2	100
	Graduate	140	43.1	43.1	43.1
	Masters and above	165	50.8	50.8	93.8
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

The highest number of data sample indicates the qualification level to be masters and above, which is at the frequency of 165 with a percentage of 50.8.

Table 5: Demographics – Income

Monthly Income (Approx.)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid					
	Below 25,000	35	10.8	10.8	100
	25,000-50,000	25	7.7	7.7	68.0
	50,000-75,000	23	7.1	7.1	75.1
	75,000-100000	46	14.2	14.2	89.2
	100000-above	196	60.3	60.3	60.3
	Total	325	100.0	100.0	

This indicates that majority of the sample population earns above 100,000/= on monthly basis which can be considered as a good spending power for the activities like tourism.

Correlation Analysis

Table 6: Correlation Matrix

Correlations								
		e-Word of Mouth Marketing	Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing	Viral Digital Marketing	Social Media in Digital Marketing	Credibility of Information on Digital Marketing	Hindrances of Digital Marketing	Tourism Promotion
e-Word of Mouth Marketing	Pearson Correlation	1	.562**	.594**	.532**	.625**	.563**	.643**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.562**	1	.460**	.530**	.437**	.437**	.620**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Viral Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.594**	.460**	1	.532**	.652**	.440**	.785**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Social Media in Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.532**	.530**	.532**	1	.608**	.521**	.630**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Credibility of Information on Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.625**	.437**	.652**	.608**	1	.421**	.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Hindrances of Digital Marketing	Pearson Correlation	.563**	.473**	.440**	.521**	.421**	1	.686**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325
Tourism Promotion	Pearson Correlation	.643**	.620**	.785**	.630**	.583**	.686**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	325	325	325	325	325	325	325

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the variables. Strong positive correlations were found between most of the independent variables and tourism promotion.

Regression Analysis

The model discusses the ANOVA and analysis of coefficients based on factors, as well as the model summary.

Table 7: Regression Model Results

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.804	.796	.487	1.40058
a. Predictions: (Constant), Hindrances of digital Marketing, Credibility of Information on Digital Media, Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing, Viral Marketing Digitally, Social Media in Digital Marketing, e-Word of Mouth Marketing				

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to investigate the impact of independent variables on tourism promotion. The model summary showed a strong relationship between the model and the dependent variable (tourism promotion), with an R-Square value of 0.796, indicating that 79% of the variation in tourism promotion is affected by the predictor variables associated with digital marketing.

Table 8: Regression Model Results – ANOVA

ANOVA						
	Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	614.321	6	102.387	52.195	.000
	Residual	623.793	318	1.962		
	Total	1238.114	324			
a. Dependent Variable: Tourism						
b. Predictions: (Constant), Hindrances of digital Marketing, Credibility of Information on Digital Media, Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing, Viral Marketing Digitally, Social Media in Digital Marketing, e-Word of Mouth Marketing						

In the above table the sig value appears to be lower than 0.05 which suggests that the model is proved to be significant for the study.

Table 9: Regression Model Results – Co-efficient

Coefficients						
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.B
1	(Constant)	4.275	.486		8.806	.000
	e-Word of Mouth Marketing	.589	.061	.583	9.671	.000
	Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing	.256	.047	.283	5.473	.000
	Viral Digital Marketing	.084	.068	.070	4.233	.003
	Social Media in Digital Marketing	.087	.040	.123	5.188	.002
	Credibility of Information on Digital Marketing	.129	.062	.126	2.086	.138
	Hindrances of Digital Marketing	.210	.053	.205	4.979	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Tourism						

The regression analysis of coefficients is done through SPSS. It helps determining the nature of relationship between the dependent and each of the independent variable which means it helps finding out the negative or the positive relationship between dependent and the independent variables.

The sig value lesser than 0.05. has a significant and higher than 0.05. has a high and low impact respectively.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 10: Hypothesis Testing

S No	Hypothesis	T-Value	Sig Value	Empirical Conclusion
H1	e-Word of Mouth Marketing plays a vital role in promoting tourism	9.671	0.00	Rejected
H2	Influencer/Affiliate Digital Marketing plays a vital role in promoting tourism	5.473	0.00	Rejected
H3	Viral Marketing Digitally is important to boost tourism	4.233	0.003	Accepted
H4	Social Media in Digital Marketing plays a key role in promoting tourism	5.188	0.002	Accepted
H5	Digital Media Marketing has credibility issues in promoting tourism	2.086	0.138	Rejected
H6	The constraints in digital promotion has an impact in slow growth of tourism	3.979	0.00	Accepted

The results derived from SPSS states that only 5 of the stated Hypothesis from this study are accepted. However, one on them is rejected based upon the T value which is lesser than 4.0 and Sig Value which is greater than 0.05.

CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study was on the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. Tourism Promotion is the study's dependent variable, and it depends on the independent variable, which is digital marketing. This study gives detailed information on how the utilization of various digital marketing platforms and strategies affects tourism promotion. In this study, the correlations between the dependent and independent variables are carefully examined and described.

Every independent variable in this study is examined individually to determine its impact on the dependent variable. The findings indicated that five out of six independent variables were accepted. However, one of them was turned down, demonstrating that the element had no appreciable influence on DV. The other 5 independent variables' additional results demonstrated that they have a strong, complete positive link with the DV and that they have a variety of effects on it.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study investigates digital marketing's effect on enhancing Pakistani tourism, examining six digital marketing aspects and their impact on tourism promotion. Through a survey of 500 individuals, receiving 325 responses, it finds that all but digital media credibility positively influence tourism. The research highlights digital marketing's efficiency and growing importance over traditional methods, with strong reliance on e-word of mouth, influencer marketing, and the effectiveness of viral marketing and social media in attracting tourists. Pearson's Correlation Analysis showed positive correlations among most digital marketing variables and tourism promotion, underscoring the shift towards digital strategies in tourism marketing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Encourage e-word of mouth marketing:** Recognize the impact of electronic word-of-mouth marketing on consumer decisions and leverage it to promote tourism effectively. Future research can further explore this variable's effectiveness in tourism promotion.
2. **Utilize influencer/affiliate marketing:** Tap into the potential of influencer and affiliate marketing to attract more consumers to tourism destinations. This strategy can work wonders, especially considering the inherent appeal of the tourism industry.
3. **Harness the power of viral marketing:** Employ viral marketing strategies to rapidly boost tourism in Pakistan. Case studies and examples show the potential of viral campaigns to drive significant growth.
4. **Leverage social media for success:** Recognize social media's dominance in digital marketing and utilize it to reach potential travelers effectively. Social platforms play a critical role in travelers' research and decision-making process.
5. **Credibility of information:** While credibility of information on digital media is not a primary factor impacting tourism promotion, efforts should be made to ensure accurate and reliable information is available to potential tourists.
6. **Overcome hindrances in digital marketing:** Overcome digital marketing obstacles by embracing the digital revolution in tourism promotion to boost competition and reach a worldwide audience. Collaboration and partnerships are crucial for maximizing digital tourist projects.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research offers numerous players in the tourism industry insightful information. Understanding consumer purchasing intentions can be useful for marketing academics, specialists, and practitioners. The results can be used by academic researchers for more study. Based on the study's findings, consumers and clients can make knowledgeable selections. The research can also be used to make commercial decisions for electrical brands and other companies. Given the growing significance of customer purchase intents and electronic word-of-mouth in the tourism business, the study also creates prospects for further investigation in this area.

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