

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies in Promoting Coir Products in Kerala: A Theoretical Study

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Abstract

The coir industry is one of the oldest and most significant traditional industries in India, with a strong historical and economic base in the state of Kerala. Coir, derived from coconut husk, is widely used to produce eco-friendly products such as mats, ropes, carpets, rugs, door mats, wall hangings, coir pith, geotextiles etc. The industry plays a crucial role in generating rural employment, particularly among women, and contributes substantially to India's export earnings. However, in recent years, the sector has faced multiple challenges, including declining dependence on traditional markets, increasing competition from synthetic substitutes, and limited adoption of modern marketing practices. With the rise of digital transformation, marketing strategies have shifted from traditional channels to digital platforms. This theoretical study explores the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting coir products with particular reference to Kerala. The study examines various digital tools such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), e-commerce platforms, and content marketing and evaluates their role in improving customer engagement, brand awareness, and sales performance. Special attention is given to the relevance of digital marketing for eco-friendly and sustainable products like coir, which have growing demand in international markets. Based on secondary data and literature review, the study proposes a conceptual model linking digital marketing strategies with consumer behaviour and business performance. This research paper identifies key trends, opportunities, and challenges associated with the adoption of digital marketing in the coir sector. The findings suggest that digital marketing significantly enhances market reach, especially for eco-friendly products like coir, but challenges such as lack of digital literacy and infrastructure persist. The study concludes that while digital marketing holds immense potential for transforming the coir industry, its success depends on capacity building, government support, and improved access

to digital resources. Strategic initiatives aimed at training, infrastructure development, and policy support are essential to fully leverage the benefits of digital transformation in this traditional sector.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Coir Industry, Kerala, E-commerce, Social Media Marketing, Consumer Behaviour

Introduction

The coir industry is a traditional agro-based sector that plays a vital role in Kerala's rural economy. Coir, the natural fibre obtained from coconut husk, has gained renewed attention in the context of environmental sustainability and green consumerism. Recent empirical studies examine how environmental awareness and green trust influence consumers' willingness to buy coir-based products. Coir, derived from coconut husk, is widely used to produce eco-friendly products such as mats, ropes, carpets, rugs, door mats, wall hangings, coir pith, geotextiles etc. Kerala accounts for a major share of coir production in India, contributing significantly to employment and exports. However, the industry faces challenges such as declining traditional markets, competition from synthetic substitutes, and lack of effective marketing strategies. In this context, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful and cost-effective tool for promoting products, enhancing brand visibility, and reaching a global audience. This study aims to theoretically analyse how digital marketing strategies can improve the promotion and sales of coir products in Kerala.

Statement of the Problem

The traditional coir industry in Kerala, renowned for producing eco-friendly and sustainable products, holds significant potential in the global market, particularly rising demand for environmentally responsible alternatives. However, despite Kerala's dominance in coir production, the industry largely composed of small-scale units and cooperatives faces substantial challenges in effectively marketing its products in the digital era. The key issues are:

- ❖ **Low Adoption of Technology:** Traditional coir manufacturers and cooperatives underutilize digital platforms (social media, e-commerce websites, digital advertising) for promotion and sales.

- ❖ **Lack of Visibility:** The high-quality products fail to reach international and national markets due to a lack of effective digital marketing, leading to a reliance on intermediaries.
- ❖ **Inadequate Digital Skills:** There is a lack of awareness and training among coir workers and small entrepreneurs regarding online marketing, branding, and e-marketplace opportunities.
- ❖ **High Competition and Product Misconceptions:** Failure to highlight the "eco-conscious" value proposition of coir, enabling competitors with artificial products to gain market share.
- ❖ **Lack of Digital Branding:** Difficulty in creating a unique brand identity and brand awareness for traditional coir products online, preventing the realization of better price returns.

Therefore, there is a need for a theoretical study to examine the gap between existing digital marketing opportunities and the current practices within the Kerala coir sector. Such a study should aim to evaluate how targeted digital marketing strategies can address these challenges, enhance market reach, improve brand positioning, and ultimately support the sustainable growth of the industry.

Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To analyze the role of digital marketing in promoting coir products - It involves understanding the effectiveness of various digital channel such as social media platforms, search engines, email marketing, and e-commerce marketplaces in creating awareness and driving customer engagement.
- ❖ To identify key digital marketing strategies applicable to the coir industry - This objective focuses on identifying and evaluating the most suitable digital marketing strategies tailored to the unique characteristics of the coir sector, which includes small-scale producers and traditional artisans.
- ❖ To examine the benefits and challenges of digital marketing adoption- This objective seeks to provide a balanced evaluation of the opportunities and constraints associated with adopting digital marketing in the coir industry.
- ❖ To develop a conceptual model linking digital marketing and business performance - This objective aims to construct a theoretical framework that explains the relationship

between digital marketing practices and the overall business performance of coir enterprises.

Research Methodology

This study is **theoretical and conceptual** in nature. It is based on:

- ❖ Secondary data (research papers, journals, reports)
- ❖ Literature review on coir industry and digital marketing
- ❖ Analytical interpretation of existing studies

No primary data collection was conducted.

Proposed Model: Digital Marketing Effectiveness Framework

The study proposes a conceptual model consisting of independent, mediating, dependent, and moderating variables.

a. Independent Variables (Digital Marketing Practices)

- ❖ Social media marketing
- ❖ SEO and online visibility
- ❖ Content marketing quality
- ❖ E-commerce adoption
- ❖ Digital advertising

b. Mediating Variables

- ❖ Brand awareness
- ❖ Customer engagement
- ❖ Perceived eco-friendly value

These variables explain how and why digital marketing influences outcomes.

c. Dependent Variables (Business Performance)

- ❖ Sales growth
- ❖ Market expansion
- ❖ Profitability
- ❖ Customer retention

These represent the final outcomes of effective digital marketing.

d. Moderating Variables

- ❖ Digital literacy level
- ❖ Firm size

- ❖ Access to resources

These variables influence the strength and direction of relationships between digital marketing and business performance.

Review of Literature

- ❖ **Shameer & Remya (2025)** conducted a literature review on marketing problems in the Indian coir industry, noting that inadequate digital adoption and weak market linkages limit market access for coir producers. The study identifies limited digital marketing integration as a key barrier to reaching wider domestic and global consumers. Future research should empirically evaluate digital branding and online sales strategies for value added coir products.
- ❖ **Anbugeetha & Indu Rani (2025)** explore the marketing of coir products from a conceptual perspective, discussing how green marketing concepts, sustainability messaging, and strategic marketing mix are essential to market positioning. This paper underscores the need to leverage modern marketing methods including digital channels like social media and online content to expand awareness and sales.
- ❖ **Poornimadevi (2025)** investigates marketing strategies for coir products in Pollachi Taluk, referencing digital marketing methods such as content marketing, social media awareness campaigns, and targeting eco-conscious segments to promote coir's sustainability benefits. While focused on Tamil Nadu, many insights are relevant to Kerala due to similar market structures.
- ❖ A broader study on digital marketing and eco-friendly handicraft businesses (Jul 2025) shows that social media, SEO, e-commerce, and online community engagement significantly improve brand visibility and sales growth in traditional product markets. Although this research is not specific to coir, the theoretical mechanisms (social media engagement → market reach), align closely with how digital marketing should work for coir products.
- ❖ **Social media marketing studies in handicraft sectors** (e.g., Guha *et al.* 2016) demonstrate that social media activities directly influence brand awareness, brand image, and purchase intention for traditional products, offering theoretical support for similar effects in coir product marketing online.

Advantages/Benefits of Digital Marketing in Coir Industry

- ❖ Global reach and market expansion- Digital marketing allows coir manufacturers and cooperatives in Kerala to reach customers beyond local and regional boundaries.
- ❖ Cost-effective promotion- Compared to traditional marketing methods (TV, print, trade fairs), digital marketing is more affordable.
- ❖ Direct interaction with customers- Digital platforms enable real-time engagement and Builds trust and long-term relationships with customers, which is crucial for repeat business and word-of-mouth marketing.
- ❖ Increased brand awareness- A recognizable brand increases customer loyalty, encourages premium pricing, and positions Kerala coir as a quality eco-friendly product in international markets.
- ❖ Better targeting of eco-conscious consumers- Many international and urban consumers prefer sustainable and eco-friendly products.
- ❖ Digital marketing helps overcome geographical limitations and enhances competitiveness in global markets.

Challenges in Digital Marketing Adoption in the Coir Industry

- ❖ Despite its advantages, several challenges exist:
- ❖ Lack of Digital Literacy among Rural Producers
- ❖ Limited Internet Access in Rural Areas
- ❖ Financial Constraints for Small-scale Units
- ❖ Resistance to Technological Change
- ❖ Difficulty in Competing with Established Brands Online
- ❖ Limited Knowledge of Digital Marketing Strategies
- ❖ Logistics and Order Fulfillment Challenges
- ❖ Cyber security and Payment Concerns
- ❖ Cultural and Language Barriers
- ❖ Lack of Technical Support and Training Infrastructure

These challenges hinder effective implementation.

Discussion

The integration of digital marketing in the coir industry has the potential to significantly enhance its competitiveness by enabling producers to reach wider markets, improve brand

visibility, and directly engage with consumers. Coir products are 100% natural, biodegradable and eco-friendly. This matches the growing demand for products worldwide. Digital promotion through social media, e-commerce platforms, and content marketing allows coir producers to highlight these sustainability attributes, tell the story of traditional craftsmanship, and connect with eco-conscious consumers both domestically and internationally. However, the effectiveness of digital marketing in this sector is not automatic, it heavily depends on capacity building and skill development among coir artisans, including training in social media management, online sales, and digital advertising strategies. Government and institutional support is necessary to address these challenges such as limited internet connectivity, lack of access to affordable digital tools, financial constraints, and logistical barriers for rural coir producers. Without such interventions, the adoption of digital marketing techniques may remain limited, and many small-scale coir enterprises could struggle to capitalize on the opportunities offered by online platforms.

Therefore, while digital marketing offers a pathway to global competitiveness and market expansion for Kerala's coir industry, its successful implementation requires a coordinated effort combining training, infrastructure support, and strategic planning.

Findings

- ❖ Digital marketing is highly effective in increasing visibility and sales - Digital marketing allows businesses to reach a much larger audience compared to traditional methods.
- ❖ Social media and e-commerce platforms are the most impactful tools - Social media platforms (like Instagram, Facebook, etc.) help businesses engage directly with customers by sharing content, responding to queries, and building relationships. These platforms are highly influential because users spend a significant amount of time on them, making them ideal for promotion.
- ❖ Consumer awareness of eco-friendly products enhances demand - As consumers become more informed about environmental issues, they tend to prefer products that are sustainable and eco-friendly. Awareness campaigns, educational content, and transparency about product materials and processes help build trust
- ❖ Lack of digital skills remains a major barrier - Despite the advantages of digital marketing, many businesses—especially small or traditional ones—struggle due to limited digital knowledge. They may not know how to create effective online

campaigns, use social media strategically, analyze data, or manage e-commerce platforms. This skill gap prevents them from fully utilizing digital tools, reducing their competitiveness in the market. Training, education, and access to digital resources are necessary to overcome this barrier and help businesses succeed in the digital space.

Suggestions

- ❖ Provide digital training programs for coir workers
- ❖ Encourage government initiatives for digital adoption
- ❖ Develop dedicated e-commerce portals for coir products
- ❖ Promote branding of “Kerala Coir” globally
- ❖ Improve rural digital infrastructure Encourage use of social media influencers and digital campaigns
- ❖ Provide financial support for digital tools
- ❖ Introduce quality certification and standardization
- ❖ Promote digital payment systems

Conclusion

Digital marketing has strong potential to transform Kerala’s coir industry by modernizing traditional practices and expanding its market reach. Through social media, e-commerce, and online advertising, coir products can gain national and global visibility, increasing brand recognition, sales, and export opportunities. By highlighting their eco-friendly and handcrafted nature, these products can attract environmentally conscious consumers while enabling direct interaction between producers and customers, improving trust and feedback. However, challenges such as low digital literacy, limited access to technology, and weak rural infrastructure hinder adoption. Small-scale producers also face financial and technical constraints. To overcome these barriers, targeted strategies like digital training, user-friendly e-commerce platforms, and improved logistics are essential, along with strong government support through policies and incentives. With these measures, the coir industry can fully utilize digital marketing to achieve sustainable growth, global competitiveness, and better livelihoods.

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