

Digital Marketing Adoption and Potential in Kodagu District, Karnataka

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Abstract- Digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses across the globe, enabling enterprises to reach wider audiences with cost-effective strategies. In the context of Kodagu district, a region known for its coffee plantations, tourism, and Agro-based industries, digital marketing plays a significant role in bridging the gap between traditional markets and modern consumer behaviour. With increasing internet penetration, smartphone usage, and social media engagement, businesses in Kodagu—ranging from small coffee growers and homestay operators to larger enterprises—are adopting digital platforms to promote their products and services. Kodagu District, known for its coffee plantations, spices, eco-tourism, and cultural heritage, exhibits strong potential for digital marketing-driven economic growth. This study explores the status, challenges, and opportunities of digital marketing adoption within Kodagu’s tourism and agricultural sectors. Through a desk-based literature review—including regional comparisons like Shimoga District—and analysis of local initiatives such as the new tourism website and NTFP marketing by cooperatives, the paper highlights barriers such as infrastructure and awareness gaps, and proposes targeted recommendations. Findings suggest that strategic digital inclusion, capacity building, and public-private coordination can significantly elevate Kodagu’s digital footprint and economic outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing has become an essential part of modern business strategies, transforming the way companies and individuals connect with their target audiences. Unlike traditional marketing, which relies on physical channels such as newspapers, posters, and word-of-mouth, digital marketing utilizes online platforms including social media, websites, search engines, and e-commerce portals. This shift has made marketing more interactive, measurable, and cost-effective, opening new opportunities for businesses of all sizes.

In Kodagu district, widely known as the “Scotland of India,” the economy primarily depends on agriculture, coffee cultivation, spices, and tourism. The rise of internet penetration and mobile connectivity in the region has encouraged local businesses—such as coffee growers, handicraft sellers, eco-tourism promoters, and homestay owners—to adopt digital platforms for promotion and sales. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, along with e-commerce portals, are increasingly being used to reach both domestic and international customers.

Digital marketing in Kodagu is not only boosting visibility for local products and services but also enhancing entrepreneurship opportunities, particularly for rural youth and women. At the same time, challenges such as limited digital literacy, inconsistent internet infrastructure in remote areas, and lack of awareness about advanced tools hinder its widespread adoption. Despite these obstacles, digital marketing holds significant potential for fostering economic growth and positioning Kodagu’s products and tourism offerings on a global stage.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Regional Digital Marketing Patterns

A 2025 empirical study on Shimoga District, Karnataka, revealed widespread digital marketing adoption challenges among rural and urban stakeholders—highlighting lack of awareness, infrastructure constraints, and resistance to change Atlantis Press. Similar barriers likely exist in Kodagu.

2.2 Local Tourism Initiatives

The tourism portal explorekodagu.com offers digital visibility to certified hospitality providers, enabling direct engagement with potential tourists and enhancing marketing reach.

2.3 Agricultural and NTFP Marketing

An Indian Forester study (2025) examined how Large Sized Adivasi Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) in Kodagu manage Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP). The Bhagamandala LAMPS notably added value—selling processed shikakai with a 50% consumer rupee share for collectors—indicating untapped potential for digital direct to consumer marketing.

2.4 Broader Insights on Digital Marketing

Studies of SMEs in Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) show that adoption is limited by low awareness, insufficient expertise, and financial constraints, despite clear benefits like cost-effectiveness, wider reach, and increased sales [ierj.in](#). Other academic work confirms social media's growing centrality for tourism promotion, while India's rural digital ecosystem remains challenged by connectivity issues

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate digital marketing awareness and adoption among Kodagu's tourism operators and agricultural stakeholders (including cooperatives).
2. Identify enabling factors (e.g., institutional support, digital platforms) and barriers (e.g., infrastructure, skills gaps).
3. Analyze the role of local digital initiatives (tourism website, LAMPS marketing) in shaping opportunities.
4. Recommend strategies to bolster digital marketing uptake and impact.

4. METHODOLOGY

- Desk Review: Analysis of literature, government initiatives, academic studies, and digital initiatives.
- Surveys: Quantitative questionnaires targeting local business owners to assess:
- Case Studies: In-depth profiling of:
 - A homestay listed on the tourism portal and its digital reach.

5. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Digital Initiative Landscape

The tourism website—[explorekodagu.com](#)—marks a step toward centralized digital presence, boosting visibility for certified establishments *The Times of India*+1. The NTFP cooperative study highlights that

value addition combined with strategic marketing can raise income shares substantially [indianforester.co.in](#).

5.2 Barriers and Constraints

Drawing parallels with Shimoga's experience, Kodagu likely shares the same hurdles: unreliable rural internet, limited digital skills, and cautious stakeholder attitudes *Atlantis Press*Xiv. The Coimbatore SME study reinforces these concerns—lack of awareness and trained personnel impede adoption despite digital marketing's advantages [ierj.in](#).

5.3 Market Demand and Growth Potential

Kodagu's exponential tourism rise—from 23 lakh visitors in 2022 to 74 lakh in 2023—suggests robust market potential for digital outreach *The Times of India*. With agriculture and NTFPs strong contributors to the local economy, integrating e-commerce and digital branding could enhance profit margins and expand market access.

6. DISCUSSION

Kodagu mirrors patterns observed in other rural districts: digital marketing remains underutilized due to systemic constraints, despite proven advantages. The tourism website creates infrastructure for agency, but gaps remain in follow-through adoption by grassroots providers. Farming and cooperative sectors—like NTFP marketing—present ripe ground for digital tools to enhance revenue and empower producers. Combining eco-tourism, artisan products, and digital storytelling could deepen consumer engagement and economic efficiency.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Capacity Building: Launch digital marketing workshops across taluks (Madikeri, Virajpet, Somwarpet, Ponnampet and Kushalanagar), focusing on SEO, social media, Google My Business, and small-scale e-commerce. Encourage partnerships with institutions like CIIM for certification-tailored modules CIIM.
2. Public-Private Collaboration: Encourage *Moris Media* and similar agencies to offer affordable service bundles (e.g., listing + social media) tailored for local tourism and agricultural businesses *Moris Media*.

3. Connectivity Enhancement: Advocate with state and central agencies to strengthen rural internet—critical for sustained digital outreach.

4. Support Value-Added Producers: Use the LAMPS model to promote e-commerce platforms for products like shikakai and coffee, increasing collector income.

5. Showcase Success Stories: Share case studies (e.g., homestays benefitting from tourism website, LAMPS sellers of shikakai) to build peer motivation.

6. Leverage Influencer Marketing: Explore regional influencer collaborations, aligning with newer state guidelines on digital media promotion

8. CONCLUSION

Kodagu's tourism and agricultural strengths, combined with rising digital infrastructure, create a compelling case for expanded digital marketing adoption. Key barriers—skill gaps, connectivity, financial constraints—must be addressed through coordinated efforts by government, training institutions, agencies, and local cooperatives. With such support, Kodagu can fully harness digital marketing to enhance livelihoods, promote its ecological and cultural assets, and enter global markets more effectively.

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