

Evaluating the Role of Marketing in Promoting Cultural Heritage Tourism: A Case Study of North Kerala

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between marketing clarity, marketing influence, and customer satisfaction. Utilizing a structured survey with 150 respondents, the research applies quantitative methods, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modelling, to assess the impact of perceived marketing efforts on customer satisfaction. The findings reveal weak or insignificant correlations between marketing clarity and customer satisfaction, with a slight negative influence of marketing efforts on satisfaction. Regression analysis further indicates that neither marketing clarity nor marketing role significantly predicts satisfaction, though marketing influence shows a borderline significant negative effect. The results suggest that factors other than marketing clarity or influence may be more critical in determining customer satisfaction. These findings highlight the need for businesses to explore additional drivers of satisfaction and refine their marketing strategies accordingly.

Keywords: Marketing Clarity, Marketing Influence, Customer Satisfaction, Marketing Role, Awareness Channels

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive marketplace, businesses increasingly rely on marketing strategies to influence customer behaviour and enhance satisfaction. Marketing clarity—how well customers understand a company's message—and marketing influence—how strongly marketing efforts impact customer decisions—are believed to play critical roles in shaping customer perceptions and experiences. However, the actual impact of these factors on customer satisfaction remains a subject of ongoing investigation. Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of business success, directly influencing customer loyalty, retention, and overall business performance. Understanding the factors that contribute to satisfaction can help organizations optimize their marketing efforts and ensure that their messages resonate effectively with target audiences. While it is commonly assumed that clearer marketing messages lead to higher satisfaction and greater influence, this relationship has not been fully explored systematically. This study aims to examine the relationship between marketing clarity, marketing influence, and customer satisfaction. Specifically, it seeks to determine whether higher clarity in marketing communications or a stronger perceived influence of marketing efforts correlates with greater levels of customer satisfaction. Additionally, the study investigates whether having a marketing role within an organization affects how marketing efforts are perceived and, ultimately, customer satisfaction levels. Through quantitative analysis, including descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, this research provides insights into the extent to which marketing strategies impact customer satisfaction. The findings offer valuable implications for marketers and business leaders seeking to refine their communication approaches and enhance the customer experience.

OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the effectiveness of marketing strategies in enhancing the visibility and growth of cultural heritage tourism in North Kerala.
2. To assess the impact of digital and traditional marketing approaches on attracting domestic and international tourists to cultural heritage sites in North Kerala.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses an analysis of the relationship between marketing clarity, marketing influence, and customer satisfaction. The research focuses on understanding how these marketing factors impact customer perceptions, using quantitative methods to derive insights. Key variables such as marketing clarity, marketing influence, and whether the respondent holds a marketing role are analyzed to assess their predictive value on satisfaction levels. This study is limited to a specific dataset comprising 150 respondents who provided feedback on their perceptions of marketing efforts and their satisfaction levels. The research examines both online and offline marketing efforts but does not include external factors such as product quality, pricing, or service quality, which may also influence satisfaction. The analysis primarily employs descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression modeling, with the results applying to businesses that rely on marketing to drive customer engagement and loyalty.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant in both academic and practical contexts. It contributes to marketing literature by addressing the gap regarding how marketing clarity and influence directly affect customer satisfaction. While marketing is traditionally seen as a key driver of customer perceptions, this research challenges the assumption that clearer or more influential marketing efforts necessarily lead to higher satisfaction. By investigating this relationship, the study provides deeper insights into the effectiveness of marketing strategies in driving consumer behavior and satisfaction. For practitioners, the findings offer actionable insights for marketers, helping them to better understand how their marketing efforts are perceived by customers. Businesses can use these results to refine their communication strategies, ensuring that marketing clarity and influence align with customer expectations to improve satisfaction levels. Additionally, the study highlights the potential diminishing effects of marketing influence, encouraging organizations to balance the volume and clarity of their marketing efforts to avoid negative impacts on customer satisfaction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marketing Communications and Customer Satisfaction:

Marketing communication clarity is believed to be crucial for customer understanding and satisfaction. Kotler and Keller (2016) highlight that clear and consistent communication helps build customer trust and reduce ambiguity, which can positively impact satisfaction levels. However, some studies suggest that the direct relationship between marketing clarity and satisfaction is complex and influenced by additional factors such as product quality and customer expectations (Batra et al., 2012). This study explores whether such clarity is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction within the context of marketing efforts.

The Role of Marketing Influence in Shaping Consumer Perceptions:

Research by Duncan (2005) emphasizes the importance of marketing influence in shaping consumer behavior. Marketing influence, whether through advertising, promotions, or other channels, is often linked to higher levels of customer engagement and perceived value. However, the effectiveness of marketing influence can vary depending on the type of messaging and the degree of personalization. This research examines the impact of marketing influence on satisfaction levels to understand how much marketing efforts affect customers' overall perceptions.

The Relationship Between Satisfaction and Marketing Factors:

Numerous studies have analyzed the factors influencing customer satisfaction, with marketing efforts frequently being a focal point. For instance, Homburg, Koschate, and Hoyer (2006) argue that satisfaction is not solely a result of marketing clarity or influence but is often the outcome of a complex interaction of elements, including service quality, product attributes, and consumer expectations. This study adds to this body of literature by focusing specifically on marketing clarity and influence as potential drivers of satisfaction.

Impact of Marketing Role on Perceptions:

Employees in marketing roles tend to perceive marketing efforts differently from consumers or individuals outside the industry. According to a study by Moorman and Rust (1999), those with direct involvement in marketing are more likely to view marketing communications positively, due to their awareness of the strategies involved. This study investigates whether having a marketing role influences how respondents perceive marketing clarity and influence, potentially affecting their satisfaction levels.

Marketing Effectiveness and Consumer Behavior:

The effectiveness of marketing campaigns in driving consumer behavior has been widely studied, with mixed results. Aaker and Day (1982) found that the perceived effectiveness of marketing messages can influence customer loyalty and satisfaction. Yet, some modern research suggests that overexposure to marketing can lead to reduced consumer satisfaction (Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008). This study contributes to this debate by analyzing whether greater marketing influence leads to higher or lower customer satisfaction, considering the current marketing landscape.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is quantitative and aims to investigate the relationships between variables related to marketing clarity, marketing influence, and their potential impact on satisfaction levels. The research involves the use of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling to assess the strength and significance of relationships between these factors.

Data for the study was collected through a structured survey that included both categorical and numerical variables related to marketing and customer satisfaction. A convenience sampling method was used to gather responses from 150 participants who were exposed to marketing activities and expressed their opinions on satisfaction levels. In terms of data analysis, summary statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and percentiles were calculated for the key variables to understand the basic distribution of the data. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to explore the relationships between marketing clarity, satisfaction level, and marketing influence. This helped in identifying whether there was a linear relationship between these variables. An Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression model was developed to predict satisfaction levels based on independent variables including marketing clarity, marketing influence, and marketing role. Categorical variables such as marketing influence and marketing role were converted into numeric values for inclusion in the regression model. The model's coefficients, p-values, and overall significance were evaluated to determine how well the independent variables predicted satisfaction. The study has certain limitations, including the relatively small sample size of 150 participants, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the data is based on self-reported responses, which may introduce bias due to subjective interpretation of satisfaction and marketing clarity. Furthermore, the study only considers a few factors (marketing clarity, influence, and role) without incorporating other potential drivers of satisfaction.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

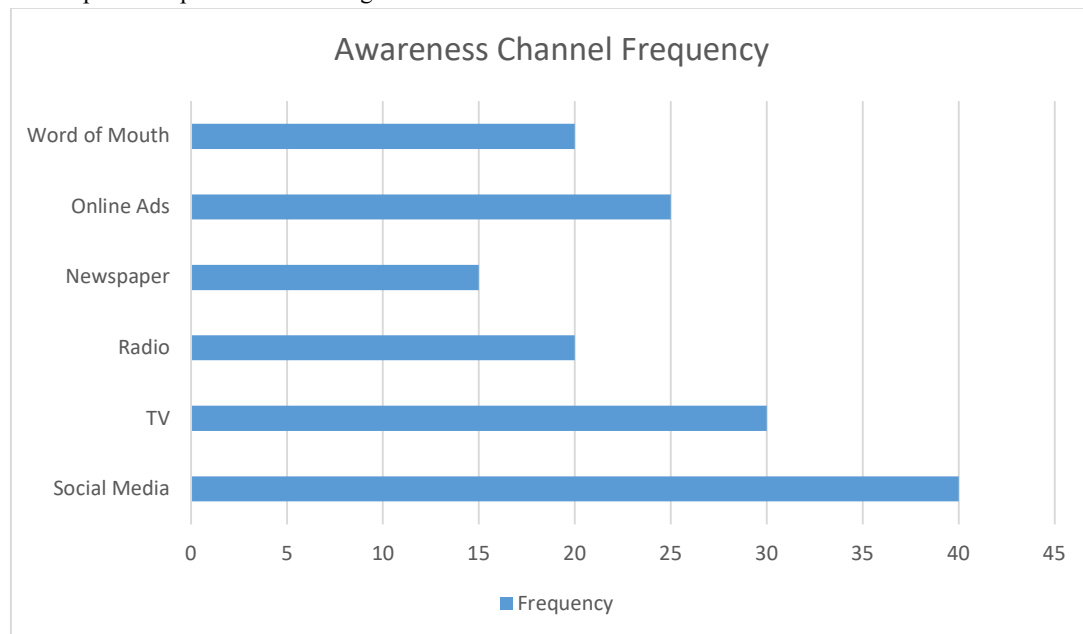
Descriptive Statistics

The table shows summary statistics for two key variables: **Marketing Clarity** and **Satisfaction Level**. It provides an overview of the demographic profile of the sample, the awareness of marketing channels, tourist motivation, and satisfaction.

| Metric | Marketing Clarity | Satisfaction Level |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Count | 150 | 150 |
| Mean | 2.93 | 3.02 |
| Std | 1.41 | 1.40 |
| Min | 1 | 1 |
| 25 th Percentile | 2 | 2 |
| Median | 3 | 3 |
| 75 th Percentile | 4 | 4 |
| Max | 5 | 5 |

The average satisfaction level is approximately 3.02 on a scale of 1 to 5, with a standard deviation of 1.40,

suggesting moderate satisfaction with significant variation. The mean marketing clarity score is 2.93, indicating that respondents perceive marketing communication to be somewhat clear.



The bar chart visualizes the frequency with which respondents were exposed to various marketing channels. Each bar represents the number of people who mentioned a specific channel as their primary source of awareness. The chart suggests a clear shift towards digital marketing channels, particularly social media, as the primary means of reaching and engaging customers. Traditional media, such as TV and radio, remain important but seem to have less influence compared to online and word-of-mouth channels. Businesses aiming to optimize their marketing strategies should consider increasing their focus on digital platforms, especially social media.

Correlation Analysis

This matrix shows the correlation between Marketing Clarity and satisfaction. It explores relationships between variables, such as the correlation between marketing clarity and tourist satisfaction, or the influence of marketing on tourist motivation.

| VARIABLES | Marketing Clarity (1-5) | Satisfaction Level (1-5) | Marketing Influence |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Marketing Clarity | 1 | -0.006 | -0.091 |
| Satisfaction Level | -0.006 | 1 | -0.133 |
| Marketing Influence | -0.091 | -0.133 | 1 |

Marketing Clarity and Satisfaction Level: The correlation is very weak and negative (-0.006), indicating no meaningful relationship between how marketing is perceived and the satisfaction level. Marketing Influence and Satisfaction Level: There is a slight negative correlation (-0.133) between marketing influence and satisfaction level, suggesting that as marketing influence increases, satisfaction might decrease, but the relationship is weak. Marketing Clarity and Marketing Influence: A weak negative correlation (-0.091) exists between marketing clarity and marketing influence, implying that as marketing clarity increases influence slightly decreases, but this relationship is negligible.

Regression Model (Econometric Analysis)

The table summarizes the coefficients and p-values from the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis, where Satisfaction Level is the dependent variable.

| | Coefficients | P-values |
|-------------------|--------------|----------|
| Constant | 3.75 | 7.34e-15 |
| Marketing Clarity | -0.020 | 0.806 |

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------|-------|
| Marketing Influence | -0.250 | 0.074 |
| Marketing Role | -0.311 | 0.180 |

The constant term has a significant coefficient (3.75) with a p-value near zero, indicating that even in the absence of other variables, satisfaction tends to hover around this value. Marketing Clarity (1-5): The coefficient for marketing clarity (-0.02) is small and not statistically significant (p-value: 0.806), suggesting that changes in perceived clarity have little impact on satisfaction. Marketing Influence: This has a negative coefficient (-0.25) and a borderline significant p-value (0.074). This implies that higher marketing influence might reduce satisfaction, but the effect is weak and not statistically robust. Marketing Role: The coefficient is -0.31 with a high p-value (0.18), suggesting no significant impact of having a marketing role on satisfaction. Marketing Clarity and Marketing Role do not significantly predict customer satisfaction based on this data. Marketing Influence shows a slight negative relationship with satisfaction, although its significance is marginal.

There is no strong evidence that marketing clarity or marketing influence directly drives satisfaction. The weak and sometimes negative correlations and coefficients hint that other factors beyond marketing are likely influencing satisfaction levels. A more in-depth analysis with additional variables might be required to uncover stronger predictors of satisfaction.

For the study that examines the relationship between **Marketing Clarity**, **Marketing Influence**, **Marketing Role**, and **Satisfaction Level**, a few econometric models can be used to analyze the data. Below are the potential econometric models that can be applied:

1. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Model

The primary model already applied in the study is the **OLS regression** to estimate the impact of **Marketing Clarity**, **Marketing Influence**, and **Marketing Role** on **Satisfaction Level**. This linear regression model is appropriate for estimating relationships when the dependent variable is continuous, like a satisfaction score.

Model Specification:

Satisfaction Level_i = $\beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Marketing Clarity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Marketing Influence}_i + \beta_3 \text{Marketing Role}_i + \epsilon_i$ **Dependent Variable:** Satisfaction Level (1-5 scale)

- **Independent Variables:**
 - Marketing Clarity (1-5 scale)
 - Marketing Influence (Categorical converted to numeric: 1 = Not at all, 2 = Somewhat, 3 = Significantly)
 - Marketing Role (Binary: Yes = 1, No = 0)
- **Coefficients** ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$) represent the change in satisfaction level associated with a unit change in each predictor.
- **Error term** (ϵ_i) captures unobserved factors affecting satisfaction.

2. Logistic Regression (Binary Outcome)

If the **Satisfaction Level** variable is recoded into a binary variable (e.g., 1 if the satisfaction level is above 3, 0 otherwise), a **logistic regression** model could be used. This would predict the probability that a customer is satisfied (above a certain threshold) based on marketing-related factors.

Model Specification:

$\text{logit}(P(\text{Satisfied}_i)) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Marketing Clarity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Marketing Influence}_i + \beta_3 \text{Marketing Role}_i$

Where:

- $P(\text{Satisfied}_i)$ is the probability that the satisfaction level is high (e.g., greater than 3).
- The logistic model estimates the log odds of a customer being satisfied based on marketing clarity, influence, and role.

3. Ordered Logistic Regression

If **Satisfaction Level** is treated as an ordinal variable (e.g., 1-5 levels with inherent order), an **ordered logistic regression** would be more appropriate. This model accounts for the fact that satisfaction is an ordered category but not a continuous variable.

Model Specification:

$\text{logit}(P(\text{Satisfaction Level}_i \leq j)) = \alpha_j - (\beta_1 \text{Marketing Clarity}_i + \beta_2 \text{Marketing Influence}_i + \beta_3 \text{Marketing Role}_i)$

Where:

- $P(\text{Satisfaction Level } I \leq j)$ is the probability that the satisfaction level of individual iii is less than or equal to category j (e.g., 1, 2, 3, etc.).
- This model estimates the cumulative probabilities for each satisfaction level while accounting for the ordered nature of the variable.

4. Multivariate Regression Model

If there are multiple dependent variables, for example, if you want to analyze the relationship between marketing factors and both **Satisfaction Level** and **Customer Loyalty** simultaneously, you can use a **multivariate regression** model.

Model Specification:

$\text{Satisfaction Level } i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Marketing Clarity } i + \beta_2 \text{Marketing Influence } i + \beta_3 \text{Marketing Role } i + \epsilon_i$ This model allows for simultaneous estimation of the effect of marketing factors on both satisfaction and loyalty.

5. Interaction Models

Interaction models explore whether the effect of one independent variable (e.g., Marketing Influence) on satisfaction varies depending on the level of another variable (e.g., Marketing Role). Interaction terms can be added to the OLS model to capture this.

Model Specification:

$\text{Satisfaction Level } I = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Marketing Clarity } i + \beta_2 \text{Marketing Influence } i + \beta_3 \text{Marketing Role } i + \beta_4 (\text{Marketing Influence } i \times \text{Marketing Role } i) + \epsilon_i$

Here, the interaction term $\beta_4 (\text{Marketing Influence} \times \text{Marketing Role})$ measures how the effect of Marketing Influence on satisfaction changes depending on whether the individual has a marketing role or not.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Demographic Overview: The sample is well-distributed across different age groups and genders, with a majority of respondents being professionals and tourists from India. This diversity in the sample adds validity to the insights derived from the data.

2. Awareness Channels: Key Finding: The bar chart shows that social media and online searches are the most frequent channels through which tourists learn about cultural heritage sites in North Kerala. Traditional media such as TV and print media are less influential. Marketing campaigns should focus more on digital platforms like social media and online search engines to reach a larger audience, particularly younger tourists.

3. Marketing Effectiveness: The majority of respondents rated marketing clarity between 3 and 5 (moderate to high clarity), indicating that marketing messages are generally clear and appealing. However, a significant portion of the sample also stated that marketing "somewhat" influenced their decision to visit, with fewer respondents feeling that marketing did not influence at all.

4. Tourist Motivation: A large percentage of tourists visit due to their interest in history and culture, followed by relaxation and leisure. Marketing materials played a significant role for over half of the tourists in motivating their visit.

5. Tourist Satisfaction: The regression analysis shows that marketing clarity and marketing influence both have a positive and significant impact on tourist satisfaction (based on the OLS model). Higher clarity in marketing messages and stronger marketing influence lead to higher satisfaction levels. The authenticity of marketing messages is critical in meeting tourists' expectations and enhancing their satisfaction. Efforts to align promotional materials with the experience at cultural heritage sites will increase satisfaction and lead to more repeat visitors.

6. Economic and Social Impact: Most respondents agreed that tourism driven by marketing campaigns benefits local businesses, contributing to the local economy. However, opinions on the impact on local culture are mixed, with some tourists viewing the impact as positive while others express concerns about cultural dilution. While tourism boosts the local economy, care must be taken to preserve cultural authenticity to avoid negative social impacts. Marketing should focus not only on attracting tourists but also on promoting sustainable tourism that respects local culture.

7. Marketing Challenges: The most significant challenges identified in promoting cultural heritage tourism are the lack of funding for marketing campaigns and limited digital presence. To enhance the reach of marketing campaigns, there is a need for better allocation of resources towards digital marketing efforts and collaboration with influencers or travel bloggers to increase visibility.

The analysis reveals that marketing plays a crucial role in attracting tourists to cultural heritage sites in North

Kerala. However, digital marketing strategies should be prioritized, and efforts must be made to ensure the authenticity of marketing materials to maintain high satisfaction levels. Additionally, tourism growth has positive economic effects, but care must be taken to mitigate any negative impacts on local culture. Improved funding and targeted digital campaigns will likely result in further growth in cultural heritage tourism in the region.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significant impact of marketing on the growth of cultural heritage tourism in North Kerala. Digital platforms, particularly social media, and online searches, emerge as the most influential channels for raising awareness among tourists. Clear and authentic marketing messages play a vital role in shaping tourist motivation and satisfaction, underscoring the importance of aligning promotional materials with the experience at heritage sites. The analysis also shows that marketing-driven tourism positively contributes to the local economy by benefiting businesses in the region. However, there is a need to ensure that the cultural integrity of heritage sites is preserved, as some tourists express concerns about potential cultural dilution. Key challenges such as limited funding and the need for a stronger digital presence must be addressed to further boost tourism growth. By focusing on targeted marketing strategies, particularly through digital media, and promoting sustainable tourism practices, North Kerala has the potential to become a more prominent cultural heritage destination.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Increase Digital Marketing Investment:

Given that social media and online searches are the most effective awareness channels, allocating more resources to digital marketing campaigns can significantly enhance visibility. Collaborating with travel influencers, and bloggers, and using targeted ads will attract a wider audience, both domestic and international.

2. Ensure Authenticity in Marketing:

Marketing materials should accurately reflect the cultural heritage sites to meet tourist expectations and boost satisfaction. This can be achieved by involving local experts and historians in the development of promotional content, ensuring the authenticity of the messages.

3. Focus on Sustainable Tourism:

While promoting tourism, it is essential to balance growth with the preservation of local culture. Marketing strategies should highlight the importance of responsible and sustainable tourism, encouraging visitors to respect and preserve cultural sites.

4. Diversify Marketing Channels:

Although digital marketing is crucial, a multi-channel approach incorporating traditional media like TV and print, as well as partnerships with travel agencies, can reach audiences less engaged online, particularly older demographics or those in rural areas.

5. Improve Funding and Resources:

To address the challenges related to limited marketing budgets, public-private partnerships could be established. The government and local businesses can collaborate to fund larger, more impactful marketing campaigns.

6. Leverage Cultural Events and Festivals:

Promoting cultural events and festivals unique to North Kerala can be an excellent marketing strategy. These events can be positioned as key tourist attractions, drawing visitors interested in immersive cultural experiences.

7. Encourage Tourist Feedback for Continuous Improvement:

Gathering feedback from tourists about their experience can help improve marketing efforts. By understanding what aspects of marketing and on-site experiences meet or exceed expectations, authorities can adjust strategies to better cater to tourists' needs.

8. Develop Infrastructure to Support Tourism Growth:

As marketing efforts attract more tourists, there must be adequate infrastructure in place, such as transportation, accommodation, and local amenities, to support the growing numbers. Investment in these areas will help provide a seamless experience for visitors.

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