



IMPLICATIONS OF DIGITAL TOOLS TO ENHANCE RURAL TOURISM – MASARD AREA, BHOJPUR

¹*Arun Mishra and ²Prof. Dr. Anand Mohan

¹Assistant Professor-BCA Department, Jinvani Management College- ARA.

²Principal, Jinvani Management College – ARA.

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*Corresponding Author

Arun Mishra

Assistant Professor-BCA

Department, Jinvani

Management College-

ARA.

ABSTRACT

Rural tourism plays a pivotal role in fostering economic development, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting sustainable practices in rural communities. In recent years, the advent of digital tools has significantly impacted the tourism industry, offering novel opportunities to connect, engage, and enhance the overall visitor experience. This abstract provides insights into the ways digital tools support and elevate rural tourism. Digital tools such as websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications enable rural destinations to

establish a robust online presence. This accessibility facilitates easier information dissemination, showcasing unique attractions, accommodation options, and local events. Prospective tourists can conveniently research and plan their trips, thus bridging the gap between urban travelers and remote rural destinations. GPS-based navigation tools and mapping applications empower tourists to explore rural areas efficiently. These technologies provide real-time information about points of interest, scenic routes, and local amenities. This not only enhances the safety of travelers but also encourages them to venture off the beaten path, discovering hidden gems within rural landscapes. Social media platforms and online forums serve as powerful tools for community engagement. Rural businesses, including local artisans, bed and breakfast owners, and tour guides, can leverage these platforms to connect directly with potential customers. Digital marketing strategies help in promoting local products and services, contributing to the economic growth of rural areas. Digital tools enable the collection and analysis of data related to tourism trends, visitor demographics, and

resource utilization. This data-driven approach aids rural communities in making informed decisions for sustainable tourism management, ensuring that natural and cultural assets are preserved for future generations. In conclusion, the integration of digital tools into rural tourism enhances the overall experience for both tourists and local communities. By embracing these technologies, rural destinations can not only attract a broader audience but also ensure the sustainable development of their tourism industry. As technology continues to evolve, the synergy between digital tools and rural tourism is poised to play a crucial role in shaping the future of travel experiences in off-the-beaten-path destinations.

KEYWORDS: Digital tools, GPS, Social media, Digital Marketing, Data-driven approach.

INTRODUCTION

Digital tools support Rural Tourism

Digital tools can help improve the productivity and profitability of rural accommodation micro and small enterprises by making business operations more efficient and increasing access to markets.

Several basic and intermediate digital tools can help improve the profitability and productivity of micro and small accommodation businesses in two main areas: business operations and access to wider markets (Table 1).

Table 1: Digital tools for tourism accommodation businesses.

Company	Forbes Advisor India Rating	Key email features
Mail chimp	4.8	Beginner-friendly email builder, segmentation, automation
Zoho Campaigns	4.7	Unlimited emails, dynamic content, A/B testing
Drip	4.7	Email and SMS marketing
Mailer Lite	4.7	Email, website and landing page builders

Basic tools

- ➔ Email and email marketing software;
- ➔ Office software;
- ➔ Social media;
- ➔ Website;
- ➔ Digital banking;
- ➔ Online data storage;
- ➔ Computerised reservation system (CRS) or online travel agents (OTAs); and
- ➔ Online procurement and e-commerce.

Intermediate tools

- ➔ Customer relationship managers (CRM);
- ➔ Mobile apps;
- ➔ Data analytics;
- ➔ Online interaction with suppliers and clients;
- ➔ Channel managers;
- ➔ Enterprise resource management (ERM); and
- ➔ Property management systems (PMS).

Basic tools

- **Email and email marking software:** Email software is a program built for electronic mail that hosts, optimizes, or secures digital communications for personal or business use. Email service providers give customer a space to create, send, receive, or organize email.
- **Office Software:** Office suites are software packages which contain a variety of products focused on productivity such as document creation software, spreadsheets software, and presentation software. In most cases, other programs such as project management software are included in the suit. It contains a word processor, a spreadsheet program and a presentation program, an email client, a DataBase Management System, and a Desktop Publishing App.
- **Social Media:** Social media is a web-based technology to facilitate social interaction between a large group of people through some type of network. There are interactive gadgets that facilitate the creation and sharing of informative ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communication and networks.



- **Website:** A website is a group of web pages and associated content that is recognized by a shared domain name and available on at least one web server. Websites are characteristically devoted to a specific topic or resolution, such as news, education, commerce, entertainment or social networking. The utmost common website kinds are blogs, ecommerce sites, online portfolios, and corporate websites, but there are several more. Meaningful the changes between each type of website can help us understand which one we need for our commercial or project.
- **Digital Banking:** The Digital Banking meaning is banking done through the digital platform, doing away with all the form-filling like cheques, pay-in slips, Demand Drafts, and so on. It means accessibility of all banking activities online.

Types of Digital Banking

- UPI (Unified Payment Interface)
 - Internet Banking.
 - Mobile Banking.
 - Banking Cards.
 - Mobile Wallets.
 - Bharat Interface For Money.
 - POINT of SALE
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- **Online Data storage:** Online data storage is a virtual storage model that lets users and businesses upload their data across Internet channels to a remote data network. Data is stored in the cloud, or stored on servers that are not owned by the person using them. Online storage is when the data is stored on internet, hosted network or any cloud network. **Google drive and OneDrive** are the examples of online storage. Offline storage is done when the data is stored in the backup drives and other devices which don't have need of the use of internet.
 - **Computerized Reservation System (CRS):** Computer reservation systems, or central reservation systems (CRS), are computerized systems used to store and retrieve information and conduct transactions related to air travel, hotels, car rental, or other activities. Some popular central reservations systems include **Pegasus, Windsurfer, Amadeus (Travel Click), Synxis & IRCTC.**
 - **Online procurement & e-commerce:** E-procurement is the procurement of goods and services through electronic means, such as electronic commerce platforms or e-mailed bids. E-procurement company list:

SAP Ariba, Coupa, IBM etc. E-commerce is the purchase and sale of goods and services over the internet. Top Examples of Ecommerce. There are some pretty major examples of ecommerce businesses that have made it big, including **Amazon, FlipKart, eBay, and Myntra.**

MATERIALS AND METHODS

- **Customer relationship managers (CRM):** Customer relationship management (CRM) is the combination of practices, strategies and technologies that companies use to manage

and analyze customer interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle. CRM structure instances include advertising, auctions, client service, and funding.

- **Mobile apps:** A mobile app (or mobile application) is a software application developed specifically for use on small, wireless computing devices, such as smart phones and tablets, rather than desktop or laptop computers. Kinds of Mobile Apps: Instinctive, Fusion, Web and Liberal Web Apps.



- **Data analytics:** Data analytics is the group, alteration, and association of data in order to draw assumptions, make forecasts, and initiative informed decision creation. There are numerous kinds of data analysis as well as expressive, analytical, inflexible and logical analytics. Each type is cast-off for precise resolutions liable on the question a data forecaster is trying to response. For example, a data analyst would use logical analytics to figure out why somewhat occurred.
- **Online interaction with dealers and customers:** Online chat has become ubiquitous among all types of trades and businesses looking to drive auctions and recover client relationships. In the similar mood, prompt communications can become a key tool in the obtaining arsenal to improve supply chain relationship management. Robust buyer-supplier relationships can help decrease risks and control disaster when it forays. When buyers and suppliers connect effectively and efficiently, they can progress prompt collaboration to work toward the resolve of unexpected issues. Example: Amazon, Flipkart, Tata Neu.
- **Channel Managers:** A channel manager enables the process of managing online travel agents (OTA's) and other online distribution channels through which rooms are sold online. A channel manager is a part of software that connects your stuff to OTAs and harmonizes accessibilities and details across all platforms. One example of channel

management would be planning marketing policies that are specific to the producer-agent-wholesaler-retailer-consumer channel. These strategies should differ from the producer-consumer channel.

- **Enterprise resource management (ERM):** ERM (Enterprise Resource Management) and ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) are two very different systems that work together to help companies improve their operations. ERM focuses on the efficient use of internal assets such as tools, materials, personnel, and technology to effectively achieve business goals. Enterprise risk management is a procedure where businesses identify the risks and deliver solutions. The Board of Directors and Chief Risk Officer (CRO) are exclusively involved in the decision-making process. The four mechanisms of ERM involve risk identification, risk analysis, risk response, and risk control.
- **Property Management System (PMS):** A property management system (PMS) is software that eases a hotel's reservation management and administrative responsibilities. The most significant functions include front-desk operations, reservations, channel management, housekeeping, rate and occupancy management, and payment dispensation. The main components of the property management system are reservation, front desk operations, channel manager, point of sale, etc. All these help in the actual and well-organized management of hotels. Digital keys to advance the business processes of small tourism businesses comprise online payments and property management systems.

Digital Payments: Online payments suggestion suitability and efficacy by easing payments for supplies and human possessions and managing with clients. A computerized booking system as well as a channel manager that ensures that rooms listed on more than one website isn't double booked. Though they significantly improve efficiency, property management systems are currently best suited to small and medium rather than micro-businesses. Custom-made solutions precisely for managing the processes of micro accommodation businesses need to be established and mainstreamed.

Market Access: Online marketing tools, which include social media marketing, Computerized Reservation Systems (CRMs), and Online Travel Agents (OTAs) allow tourists from around the world to book and pay for housings online, and integrated with channel managers, safeguard they aren't double booked. These answers are the most often used digital and online marketing tackles by tourism businesses.

Although historically listing a business with OTAs has been luxurious, with between 10 to 20 per cent charged in directives, it is becoming gradually reasonable. An OTA, offering small tourism lodging businesses the chance to list their rooms and hotels on its stage for no emolument. In addition, dedicated websites and email marketing also serve to increase market reach for business- owners with the knowledge to utilize these tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implications of digital tools in enhancing rural tourism are multifaceted and transformative:

- 1. Accessibility and Reach:** Digital tools such as websites, social media platforms, and mobile apps enable rural tourism destinations to reach a global audience. This increased visibility can attract more tourists who are looking for unique and authentic experiences.
- 2. Information Dissemination:** Tourists can access detailed information about rural destinations, including attractions, accommodations, local events, and cultural activities. This slide helps in managing prospects and development tours efficiently.
- 3. Marketing and Promotion:** Digital marketing allows rural tourism providers to target specific demographics and interests, promoting their unique offerings effectively. This targeted approach can increase visitor numbers and revenue.
- 4. Booking and Reservations:** Online booking systems streamline the reservation process for accommodations, tours, and activities in rural areas. This convenience encourages tourists to plan and book their trips in advance, benefiting local businesses.
- 5. Visitor Engagement:** Interactive digital tools such as virtual tours, augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) experiences can enhance visitor engagement and provide immersive previews of rural destinations. These technologies can also educate tourists about local culture and history.
- 6. Community Involvement:** Digital platforms can facilitate community engagement by promoting local businesses, artisans, and cultural events. This involvement strengthens community ties and encourages sustainable tourism practices.
- 7. Feedback and Reviews:** Real-time feedback through digital platforms allows tourism providers to improve their services based on visitor reviews and ratings. This continuous feedback loop contributes to the overall quality of the tourism experience.
- 8. Sustainability and Conservation:** Digital tools can promote eco-friendly practices and responsible tourism initiatives in rural areas. Information sharing on conservation efforts and sustainable tourism practices can raise awareness among visitors.

9. **Crisis Management:** During emergencies or unforeseen events, digital communication channels can disseminate critical information to tourists and stakeholders, ensuring their safety and well-being.
10. **Data Analytics:** Analysing digital data such as visitor demographics, booking trends, and user behaviour can provide insights for strategic planning and development of rural tourism destinations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implication of digital tools in rural tourism offers significant opportunities for growth, sustainability, and enhanced visitor experiences. However, it requires careful planning, infrastructure development, and community involvement to maximize its benefits effectively.

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The implications of digital tools in enhancing rural tourism involves recognizing both the opportunities and challenges they present:

1. Opportunities

- **Increased Visibility:** Digital platforms expand the reach of rural destinations to a global audience, potentially increasing tourist arrivals and revenue.
- **Enhanced Visitor Experience:** Interactive tools like virtual tours and AR/VR can engage tourists and showcase unique aspects of rural areas, fostering memorable experiences.
- **Efficient Marketing:** Targeted digital marketing campaigns can effectively promote local attractions and accommodations, attracting diverse visitor demographics.
- **Community Engagement:** Digital platforms enable rural communities to showcase their culture, heritage, and products, fostering local pride and economic benefits.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Digital tools can promote sustainable tourism practices by educating visitors and encouraging responsible behavior.

2. Challenges

- **Digital Divide:** Limited internet access and digital literacy among residents and businesses in rural areas may hinder the adoption and benefits of digital tools.
- **Infrastructure Limitations:** Inadequate digital infrastructure (e.g., internet connectivity, mobile networks) can restrict the effective use of online booking systems and communication channels.

- **Preservation of Authenticity:** There's a risk that over-reliance on digital tools could dilute the authenticity and charm of rural destinations, impacting visitor experiences.
- **Privacy and Security Concerns:** Handling personal data and online transactions securely is crucial to maintaining trust among tourists and local businesses.
- **Skills and Training:** Residents and tourism operators may require training to effectively utilize digital tools, manage online presence, and respond to visitor expectations.

3. Strategic Considerations

- **Collaborative Approach:** Engaging local communities, tourism operators, and government agencies in planning and implementing digital strategies ensures alignment with local needs and priorities.
- **Balanced Development:** Balancing digital innovation with the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources is essential for sustainable tourism growth.
- **Continuous Evaluation:** Monitoring the impact of digital initiatives through data analytics and visitor feedback helps in refining strategies and enhancing the overall tourism experience.
- **Inclusive Growth:** Ensuring that digital initiatives benefit all stakeholders, including marginalized groups and small businesses, contributes to equitable tourism development.

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