THE HINDU

Digital marketing holds the key

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Kerala Tourism should allot more funds, say experts

S. ANIL RADHAKRISHNAN
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Tourism should allocate more funds for digital marketing, says Dileep Kumar P.I., industry expert and member of the State Tourism Advisory Council.

Kerala Tourism had embraced the digital marketing platform quite early and paced its digital penetration well. The YouTube channels and the micro sites promoted by Kerala Tourism are a huge success, he points out.

Vigorous digital marketing platforms is the key to success for any product or service. It is the most cost-effective investment where return is measurable instantly. Mr. Dileep, who has over three decades of experience in marketing, says Kerala Tourism should allocate more funds to digital platforms.

"Since Kerala Tourism is the celebrated example for public-private partnership, these trends and analyticals should be shared with private players in the State in relevant times," he argues. Then, they would be able to channelise their marketing campaigns in the right direction.

Priorities

Kerala Tourism has already set its priorities for different social media platforms based on the target markets. There are some region-specific platforms that are otherwise not popular globally like Snapchat in Saudi Arabia WeChat in China also need to be focussed upon.

"Even platforms like Quara might look too academic, but it is very effective in influencing the decision-making process of the youth who are frequent travellers. Social listening tools like Tripadvisor and Google review also need to be handled professionally to market destinations and amenities," says Mr. Dileep.

Digital presence: A grab of the YouTube page of Kerala Tourism.

> **YouTube channels and microsites promoted by Kerala Tourism are a huge success.**
>
> DILEEP KUMAR P.I.
> Industry expert

Large destination management companies, tourism service providers and hotel chains will have their own agencies to handle digital marketing. But, Kerala being the role model for small and medium, locally grown entrepreneurs in tourism, should handhold them initially to achieve the best results through digital marketing. He says Kerala Tourism in association with trade bodies like Kerala Travel Mart and IATO should conduct region-wise digital marketing workshops to bring the small players in to the same phase with growth of this wonderful platform.

Mr. Dileep also has a word of caution for those handling the social media and digital platforms that are so powerful. One has to be careful during many crisis situations due to the macro environmental forces like natural calamities, outbreak of epidemics, political unrest, one-off cases of attack on tourists. In many occasions, he says these incidents are blown out of proportion. During Nipah virus outbreak, the Middle East countries were the first to come out with travel advisories because of the strong Keralite population and their active involvement in the social media.

Kerala Tourism should have an effective crisis management and recovery plan for digital platforms to face such situations in future by taking the leaning from recent incidents of Nipah cases and floods, he adds.