

## **E-Marketing Capacity Enhancement in Tourism Through Social Media**

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### **Abstract**

The interaction with the consumer by a business has been revolutionized through research over a period of time. It is evident that evolution of internet is one of the main reasons behind the paradigm shift. In this era of technological development, global commercial environment and competitive arena, e-business appears to be the conceptual component and a backbone of mainstream business, which signifies new opportunities and opens a gateway for re-organizing the way businesses are currently practiced. Amidst this scenario, e-marketing plays a pivotal role for the Tourism board of India to attract the tourist especially from UK to provide them with a unique opportunity for physical invigoration, mental rejuvenation, cultural enrichment and spiritual elevation.

This paper evaluates the current challenges that is being faced to enhance the capacity planning for the UK tourists visiting India and the apt fit of Social Media for the e-marketing capacity planning for the tourism board of India in the form of a strategic framework.

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# Introduction

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It is a fact supported by UNWTO 2016 that tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world with travel being the largest sector. Behind the dramatic growth of travel industry new marketing techniques have a greater role that has taken over the world from the traditional marketing. Among these new marketing practices, e-marketing and the social medial marketing have become great tools for each and every organization (Buhalis, 2011). There are many organizations, boards, etc. who are successfully marketing the different places with the help of these techniques with higher results. The nature of this industry was very much suitable for the web because it is the only place where everyone can get access to any information within a seconds and tourism is one of such sector where people love to get information.

The revolution of internet and its services has converted the whole world as a close neighbourhood. This has been useful in e-ticketing and contacting tourist organizations etc. In this regard, this particular research study makes the critical analysis on the role of e-marketing and the social media in marketing capacity enhancement by exploring the case of Tourism Board of India in UK .

Tourism Board of India is an organization which is operating in UK and itswork is to attract tourist from UK to India by using the marketing techniques and providing them the entire information about the tourism in India.

## **E-Marketing in Tourism Industry**

E-marketing in tourism can be defined as the application of different principle and the techniques of the marketing in a particular field of the tourism. Marketing has become a very natural complement for the tourism sector and it is seen as a strategy which is built on the needs and expectations of the market so that it can be accessed by everyone and can enhance the attractions of the tourist services (Clarke, 2012). The appearance of the internet and itsdevelopment have made the old saying of making world a global village in a real sense. Companies are taking full advantage of this internet to develop some new marketing techniques

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so that they can attract the people towards their organizations or the countries. Government of different countries has set up their offices in the different countries so that those offices can work in those countries and can attract the tourist for their home country (Hudson, 2008). It is a known fact that tourism has become one of the biggest sources of generating revenues for the nations because it is giving them more profits than any other industry.

Tourism also improves the condition of the people in the particular country as it helps the local community to get employment and earn money. It also attracts some of the big hospitality companies and tourist boards to invest in the country and all these things helps to generate revenues for the country. By seeing the advantage of the e marketing and social media marketing, governments are encouraging to their respective boards to use this medium as it is both cheap and it has wider and quicker reach than all the other traditional mediums of marketing.

With the advent of e-marketing and social media, there are many challenges which are faced by these organizations that do the e- marketing which are very much necessary to handle because they have the capability to ruin the whole marketing campaign within few seconds. People who do not have internet connections will not be influenced by the online marketing. There are many people above the age group of 50 who do not sit on the internet and that is the reason why this age group is generally not handled by organizations (Andreu, 2009).

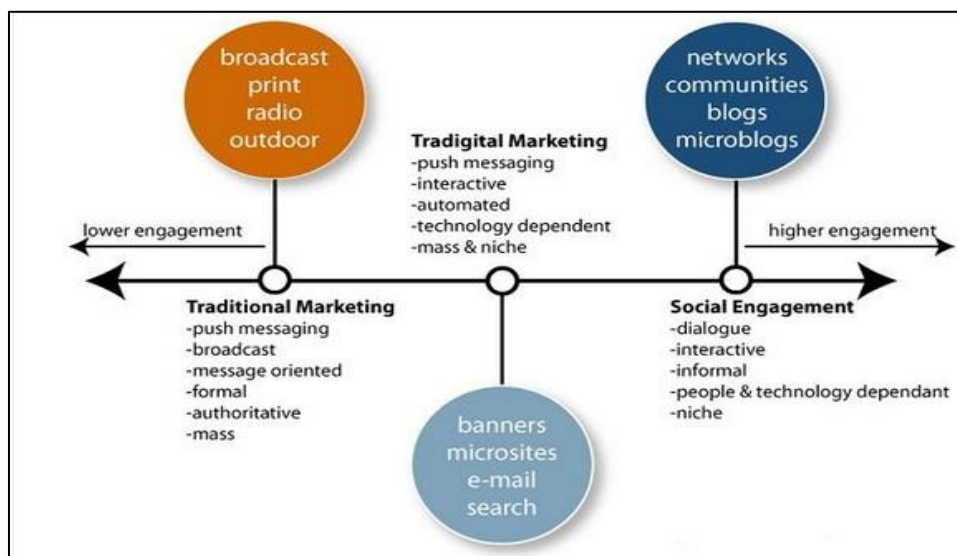
This marketing also includes email marketing and organizations just blast emails to thousands of the users together. People do not connect with these emails and they feel that there should be personalized messages for the different segment of consumers. Many a times users on the internet write various false things about particular destinations and this also the reason interest of the many tourists reduce for the particular place.

To do e-marketing also requires highly qualified team and the people who understand the core of these tools in a proper manner. It is a tool which can break and make any company within few minutes so if these are not handled properly then company will face losses. Acquiring these specialized personnel increases the cost for the company which is also very big issue.

## Social Media Marketing

Figure:1 clearly stated that social media marketing has higher engagement with the people because it is very interactive, informal and has wide reach in compare to the traditional marketing which is very formal and the message oriented.

**Figure 1: Traditional Marketing vs Social Media Marketing**



Source: (Gretzel, 2012)

There are different types of online and social marketing tools and practices that company follows, among them one of the most famous techniques is the Search Engine Optimization (SEO). It is used by the tourism organizations to increase the website traffic (Gretzel, 2012). By using this companies set their websites in such a manner that when any user will type some particular words, website of the company will be displayed on the top of the search results.

Other than this email marketing is also used by some of the organizations to promote the offers and advantages of various tourist places by sending emails to the users. Social media marketing is also used to connect to the people instantly as people can set up their profiles on the websites like Facebook, YouTube, Google+, Twitter, etc and can provide information about tourist places. People can instantly ask questions and can clarify their doubts with the company official. It is helping the organizations to create good relations with the customers (Koc, 2009). All these organizations which promote one tourist places are called as Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO's) (Destination Marketing Organization., 2014).

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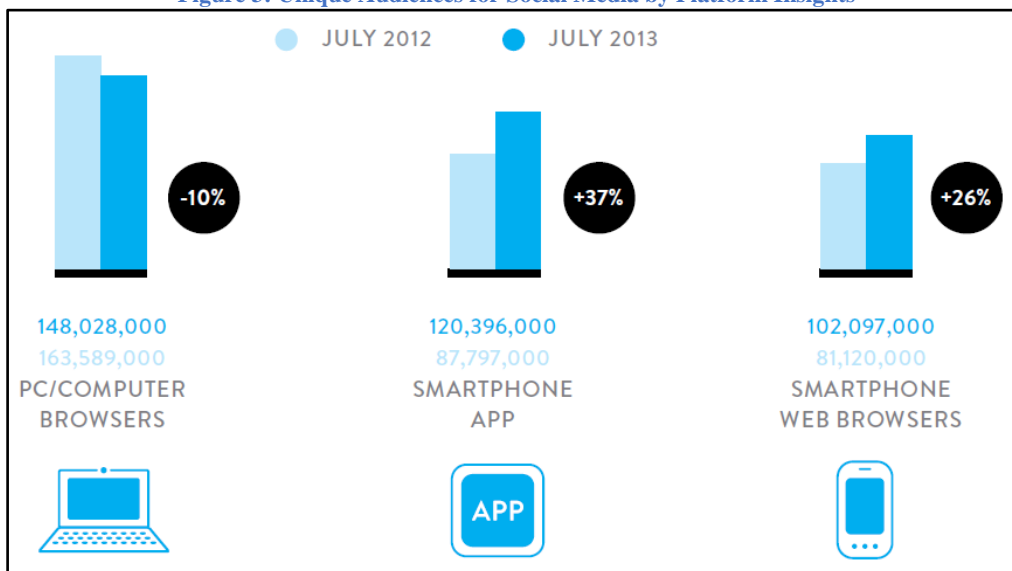
Tourism Board of India is DMO which has their office in UK and it is the official body of Indian Government. Their main work is to promote India as a tourist destination in UK so that people can get attracted and visit India for the wonderful experience (Incredible India, 2014). They are using various e-marketing, social marketing tools to attract people, due to that they have been very successful in increasing the tourism of India in terms of the UK's residents. They instantly connect with people and provide different information which is helping the tourist to know more about India and its tourist places (Volgger, 2014).

### **E-Marketing with Social Media Trends**

It has been understood that internet existence and e-marketing is essential to sustain in today's competitive market but the question arise how that relates to perform the e-marketing with the aids of Social Media and its future market. That is why it is important to understand the facts and trends of current Social Media Norm overall to ensure that the initiatives that will be taken under the e-marketing scope with the aids of Social Media for the Tourism Board of India matches or deals with a futuristic approach. Few noteworthy recent facts are being jotted down to understand the Social Media market trend to strategically devise the framework for Tourism Board of India

There is no denial that the social media usage has grown into such volume that it has reached to almost each and every corner of the world. People like to stay connected and that is the core reason what has lead the common mass embrace this platform with such a prolific manner. According to a survey conducted by The Nielsen Company in an effort to understand the Digital Consumers almost two-thirds (64%) of social media users has accepted that they visit social media sites at least once a day via their computer (The Neison Company, February 2014). However, the survey also reveals that the consumers are getting inclined towards the recent wave of Smartphones and predicted that smartphones will take over the penetration and usage of computers to access to the social media sites due to the rise of apps. According to them almost *half (47%) of smartphone owners visited social networks every day and in the last year, and the unique audience for social media smartphone apps increased by 37 percent.* (The Neison Company, February 2014). In the following insights and findings of the survey on the unique audiences of Social Media Websites and application by platform has been provided.

Figure 3: Unique Audiences for Social Media by Platform Insights

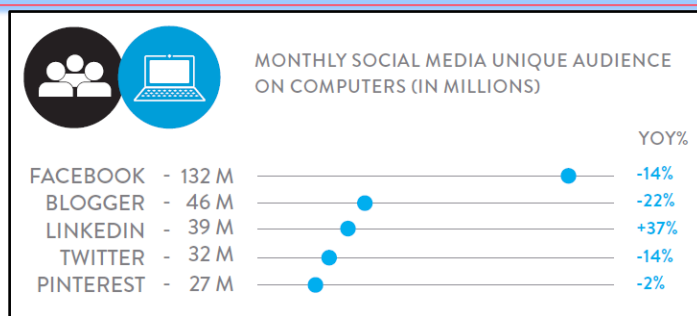


Source: (Nielson Netview, July 2013)

With the growth the multiple devices for accessibility to social media, there are multiple social profiles are also into trends for example – Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+ etc. It is interesting to see the difference on the leading social media applications depending on the accessibility devices. However, according to the same survey Facebook wins in every aspect irrespective of the devices that is being used to access the social media. The monthly social media unique audience trends have been put forward that has been referred from the same survey that gives a very good insight to choose the right platform for the e-marketing initiatives of Tourism Board of India.

If the Personal Computers are being taken into consideration then it can be found that besides, Facebook, leading all the equations, blogger, LinkedIn, Twitter and Pinterest are the top 5 social media.

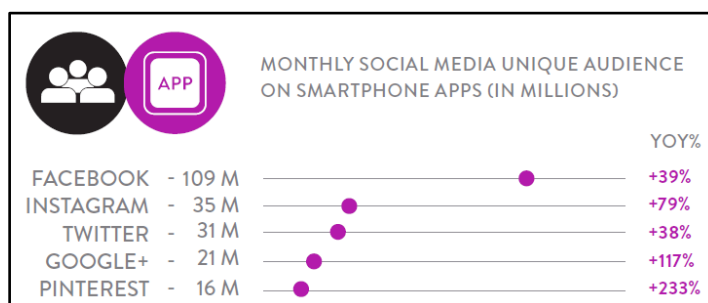
Figure 4: Social Media Usage by Computer Devices



Source: (Nielson Netview, July 2013)

However, when it is the question of applications (be it mobile, tablet or phablets) the equation changes certainly and blogger is no more at the second position in acquiring unique audience rather Instagram replaces blogger.

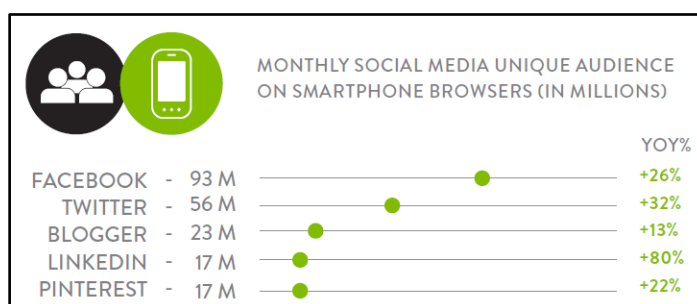
Figure 5: Social Media Usage in Smartphone Apps



Source: (Nielson Netview, July 2013)

When the social media is being accessed via the smartphone browsers here is the result of the survey.

Figure 6: Social Media Usage by Smartphone Browsers

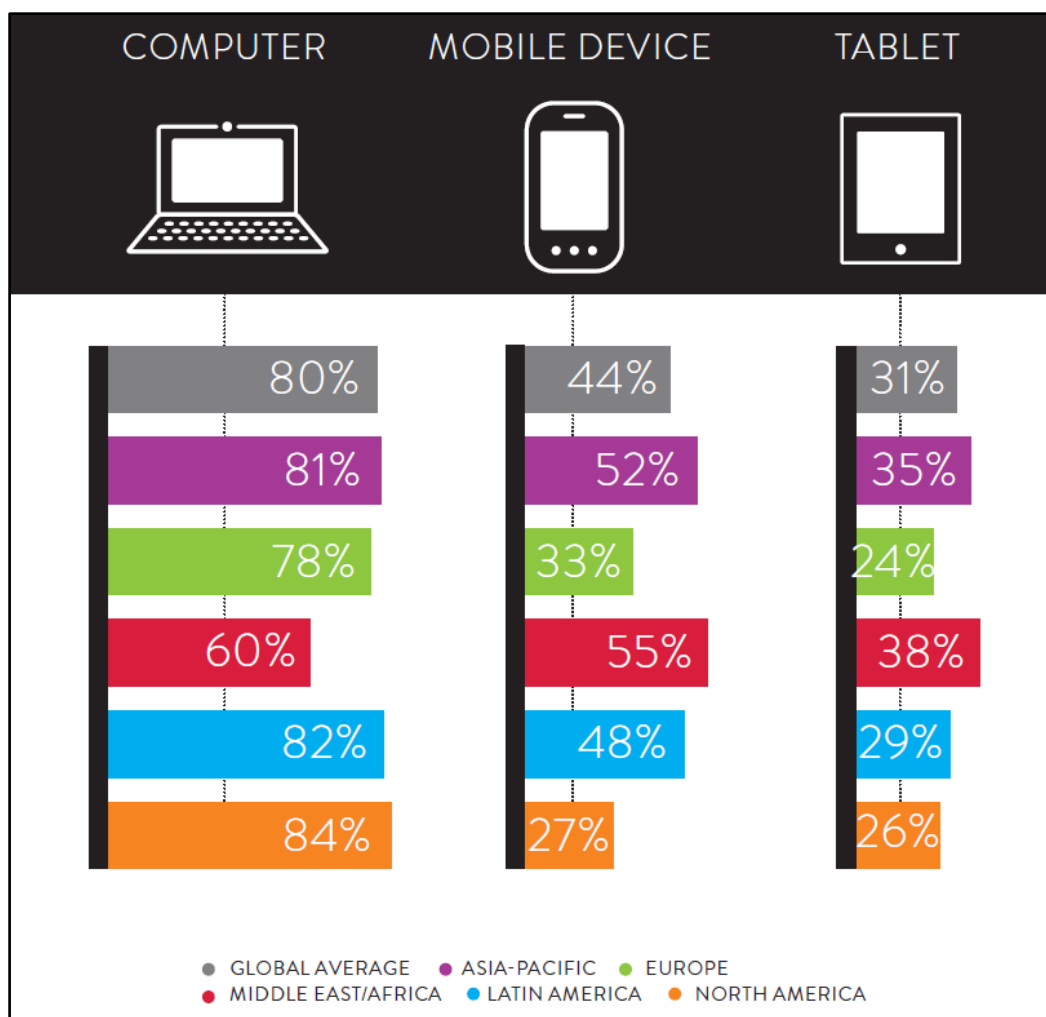


Source: (Nielson Netview, July 2013)

Now when the above is being put forward in context to the Indian Tourism board of UK it is very much necessary to unfold what devices are predominant in this market to understand which social platform should be chosen for the target market if e-marketing is being performed with the aid of Social Media.

According to Nielson Global E-Commerce Report for August, 2014, it can be clearly seen that the European market uses all the mode of accessibility, however computers are still the prime device of accessibility. Here is the screen capture of the analysis that has been found in the report titled as “E-Commerce: Evolution Or Revolution In The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods World?”

**Figure 7: Insights on European market mode of Accessibility to Social Media**



Source: (The Neison Company, February 2014)

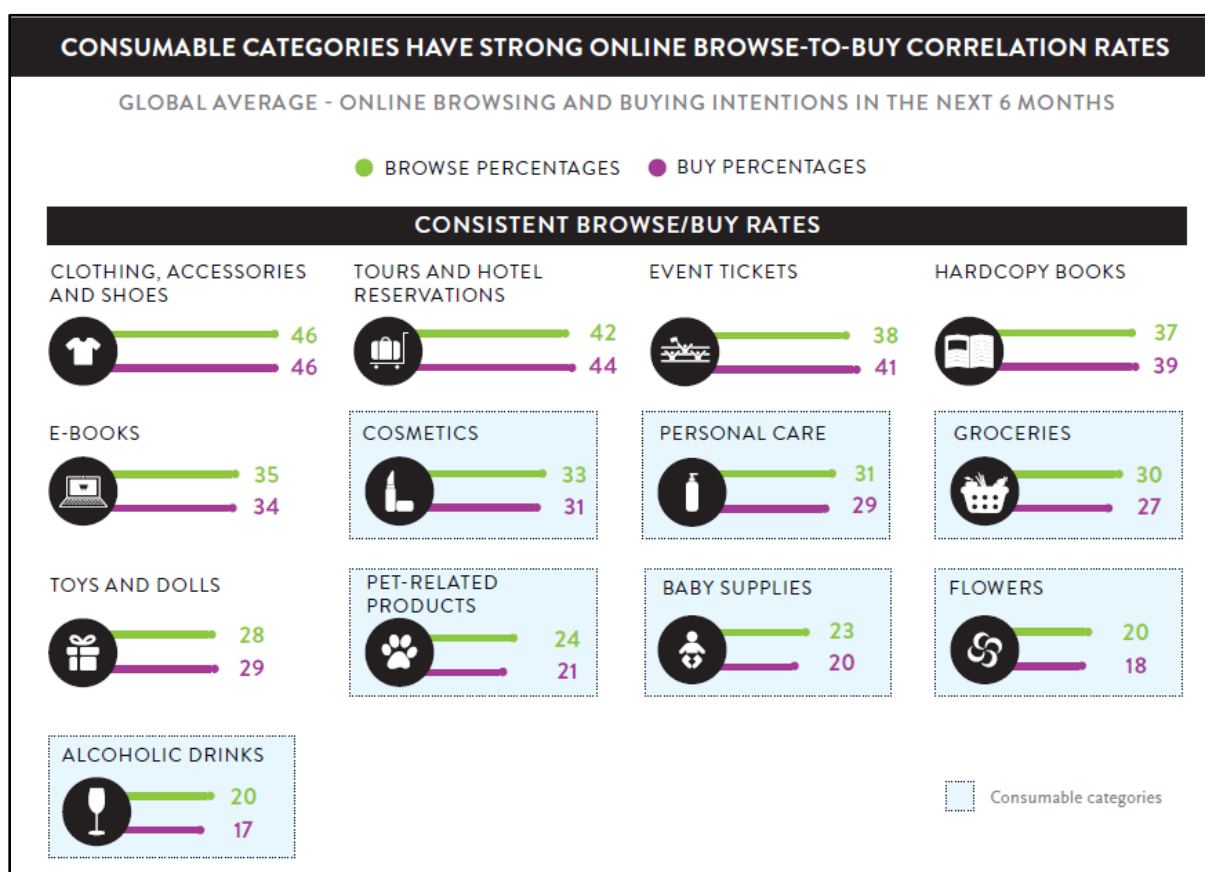


So looking at the facts and facets of E-marketing with the Social media is rightly justified in this age of social savvy world. Another aspect that is required to be ventured is the question that is the tourism industry is potential or prepared for the social media acceptance or not.

When the information is being researched it has been seen that after clothing Travel and tourism industry is the second leader to adopt to the e-marketing trend and it has embraced the technological advancement with open arms.

The following results proved to be handy to justify this.

**Figure8: Social Media adaptation in Tourism Industry**



Source: (The Neison Company, February 2014)

When all the three aspects of above discussion is being co-related it can be concluded by saying that E-marketing is on trend and social media is one of the prime factor to it and tourism industry has also adopted this. Hence, it is high time to evaluate the current measures that has been taken by the Tourism Board of India to take the advantage of it and allure the tourists of UK (European Region) to visit India and empower the tourism Industry of India.



## Current Marketing Measures of Tourism Board of India

With a vision of achieving “*a superior quality of life for People of India through development and promotion of tourism, which would provide a unique opportunity for physical invigoration, mental rejuvenation, cultural enrichment and spiritual elevation*” (Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2011), the primary mission is to *develop India as one of the most preferred tourist destinations and to increase the number of Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) to 8 million by 2015*(Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2011).

Amidst many other visions of domestic tourism, manpower skills, quality of tourism, the foreign tourism vision plays a pivotal role within the scope of this research and that is why the focus of this discussion will only revolve within the foreign tourism mainly in context to UK.

Before venturing into the marketing strategies and strategic action plans for the Tourism board of India to target the UK Travellers to India, it would be judicious to see the potentiality of the tourism market of UK. If the statistics of Indian Tourism is being researched it can be found that United Kingdom has been the second largest among tourist generating markets for India in the year 2012 retaining its position for the last few years, USA being the first (Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, 2013). The following figure will sum up the tourist arrivals in India from UK within the period of 1988 to 2012 that can be found in the statistical report of Ministry of Tourism.

**Figure9: Tourism Arrivals in India from UK - 1998-2012**



Source: (Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, 2013)

From the above figure it gets clearer that UK market for Indian Tourism has witnessed a substantial growth from the year of 2004 till date.

One of the key initiatives to retain and increase the traffic of travellers visiting India from UK in the priorities is the publicity and marketing of Indian Tourism to overseas market. It can be found from the official website of Ministry of tourism that it has 14 overseas offices “endeavouring to position India as a preferred destination in the various tourism generating markets”(Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India, 2011). However, in this internet savvy world it is very important for any tourism to reach its potential consumers via its online presence.

Realizing this in the year of 2002, the first online marketing initiative was conceptualized by V. Sunil, the then creative director and A. Kant, the then Joint Secretary if Ministry of Tourism of India. With a primary objective of branding and distinctive identification of the Country, India, Incredible India had managed to establish its strong footmark generating 16% increase in the traffic of travellers in its first year itself.

According to Bikramjit Rishi, Abhilasha Singh and Kushal Mitra, the ‘Incredible India’ campaign was launched at the peak of the crisis in Indian Tourism to bring back consumer demand, generatemomentum and enhance growth in the tourism industry(Bikramjit Rishi, 2013).

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They have opined that Incredible India campaign gave a fresh breath of life to the suffering tourism industry. From their journal article it can be understood that Incredible India was a very well executed campaign by the Ministry of Tourism, which was readily accepted and appreciated by tourists, along with Hotels, Tour Operators and other players associated with this Industry.

After 12 years of its inception 'Incredible India' still continues to attract tourists from all over the world via its strategic marketing. It can be found that almost every state has taken its tourism initiatives and branding and market positioning under the Umbrella of Incredible India. World Travel and Tourism Council has termed India as a tourism hot-spot from 2009–2018, having the highest 10-year growth potential and tourism revenues expected to surge by 42% from 2007 to 2017 (Bikramjit Rishi, 2013).

India got incredible response after online campaigns performed by Incredible India to target international holidaymakers while minimizing the campaign costs. Thus, the aim of promoting India as the destination of choice and present India as a dream tourist destination could be successfully accomplished through effective online marketing strategies.

However, instead of doing it arbitrarily it is high time that Incredible India follows a structured framework that will help them track back the outcome of the initiatives undertaken and distribute costs in an effective way via different channels of Marketing initiatives such as running colourful and enticing ads, newsletters, Social Media campaigns and promotional activities, email advertisements, mobile communications etc. with the prospective international tourists.

From the Data Gathered, few key points can be taken into consideration for the purpose of articulating the framework that has been jotted down below:

- Right amalgamation of digital and traditional marketing is better than the sum of its parts and that is what the proposal of the framework should run in parallel with the current activities so that the usual process doesn't get hindered.
- Currently although TBI is emerged with various marketing initiatives in context to the Consumer Advertising (Broadcast, print), Media and Public Relations (Media Tours, Broadcasting) and Travel Trade but the E-aspect of the marketing has not been tapped into right ways.
- ***In terms of Current Social Media Marketing Techniques and Channels for Tourism Board of India*** only Incredible India are being vastly followed but this is losing its grip due to the inactivity and similar monotonous advertisement.

. With regards to this research initiative for the e-marketing capacity enhancement with the social media, data has been gathered from the literature reviews where the e-marketing, social media and the current potentiality of Tourism India to attract the tourists from UK has been evaluated and following the current challenges for TBI and the Gaps in the current e-marketing process has been identified:

- No Existing Dedicated E-marketing Initiative
- Social Media Presence is naïve and not well maintained.

- Budget are disbursed along with marketing materials to the travel agents and there are no prerequisites for this distribution.
- No Monitoring of the Return of this Investment from the physical marketing campaigns
- Marketing campaigns are too traditional and target the audience in the traditional way
- Absence of Tourist Profiling
- Absence of Feedback/complaint management that doesn't reach to the right authority at the right time with the right information
- No personalized identity of Indian Tourism in the e-marketing sector (Other than Incredible India that is mostly state basis), rather mostly based by travel agents
- No Notification or monitoring tool used for the business performance management and measurement.
- High Security concerns for the travelers of UK in India after few undesired incidents
- No customized itinerary planner from the Tourism board of India.
- No defined business process for the e-marketing initiatives.

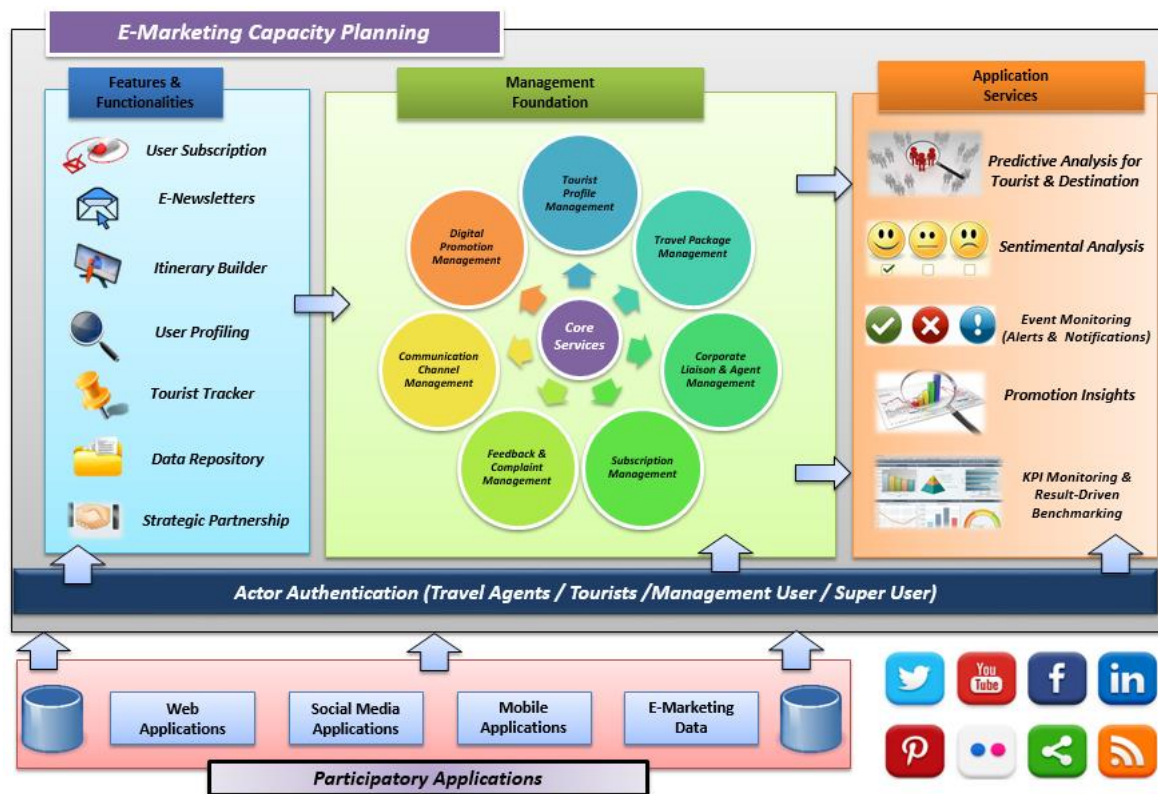
To address to the gaps that has been identified the following recommendations has been proposed where a structured framework has been crafted out for the tourism board of India currently targeting the tourists of UK, however the generic nature of the framework will help it scaled out to further potential countries.

### **Proposed Recommendations: E-Marketing Framework for TBI**

Taking all these challenges discussed earlier in concern in the following the E-marketing framework for the Tourism Board of India has been proposed. The phenomenal growth and popularity of E-marketing and its impact on the tourism business with the worldwide acceptance of Social Media and various smart technological tool integration to the business process of any organization lead the researcher to look beyond the available business process and lead to the constructive development of this conceptual and strategic framework,

The following framework has been an outcome of the rigorous research and analysis performed by the researcher and after connecting all the dots gathered and ultimately absorbed into the framework components.

Figure 10: Proposed Framework



Source: Own Illustration,2015

The framework components integrated together to qualify a web-based platform as a standard e-marketing framework for Tourism Board of India. The utmost objective behind the framework is to up bring the E-marketing of TBI with the use of Social Media.

However, with the gradual development of this framework and further readings on the technological advancement this framework had been integrated with many other modules that is necessary and found missing after the interview session from the respective personnel from the department.



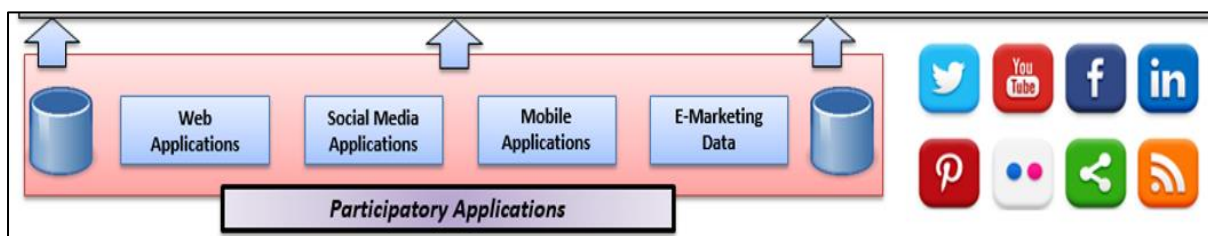
It is to be noted that Social Media is only the front-end tools that help deliver the message and target the audience in a large platform of worldwide population. To come up with a framework it is required to have an integrated approach of every aspect of e-marketing and if this interoperable integrated platform is being followed with a structured workflow management then the optimum outcome can be achieved.

In the following the components of this framework has been elaborated further.

## Participatory Applications

Participatory applications are all the application and third-party add on that should be in place to pump the data to the framework. These application hold the database which can be analysed further to create the foundation of e-marketing.

Figure 11: Participatory Applications of the Proposed Framework



Source: Own Illustration 2015

All these applications will be integrated to the e-marketing capacity modules platforms. These applications will act as the source of integrated data repository and has been categorized into four distinctive categories which are:

- **Web Applications:** Web Applications are the various websites from where data will be churned into to the single integrated data platform.
- **Social Media Application:** Various social media Applications in the platform of Facebook, Twitter etc. should be developed that will attract the promotional events and these promotional data along with the participants' data should be captured.
- **Mobile Applications:** Mobile applications are various applications that will be developed in context to the tourism upliftment of TBI and these will be integrated to the mobile interface of the overall platform to provide the cutting-edge solution to mobile users as well.

- **E-marketing Data:** A dedicated E-marketing portal should be available to the actors of the TBI and this will provide the option of e-marketing for various Destinations of India and promote multiple tourism opportunities to the travellers of UK.

This portal can further be enhanced with the required research and requirement analysis of different countries. With the structured market and socio-cultural research localized portal should be prepared for this purpose so that this can act as the single point of contact for any travellers travelling to India. As per their selection of the country the appropriate itinerary and travel options will be displayed catered to the social likings and disliking of the citizens of that country.

This will help TBI to achieve the personalization of travel to individual countries and further to individuals itself.

### Actor Authentication

Actor authentication is required to control the user accessibility on the modules. This works as the wall where various groups of categorized actors for the proposed framework authenticate themselves and depending on their accessibility grant they are allowed to interact with the modules and portal. In this initiative following are the group of actors which are:

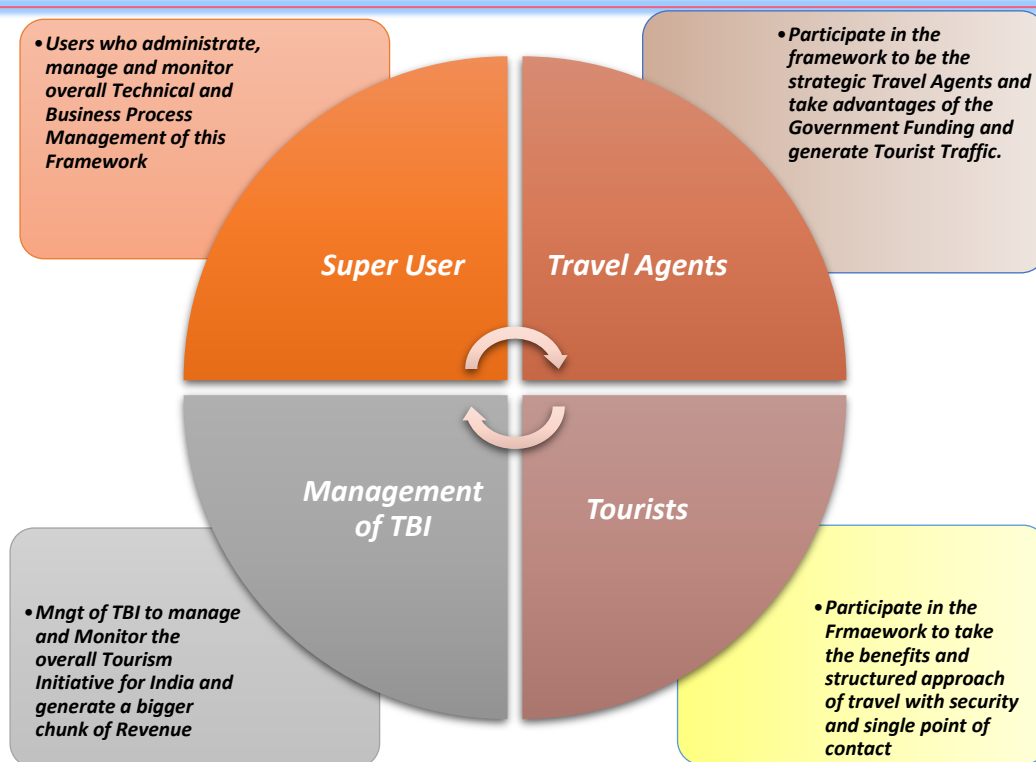
Figure 12: Actor Authentication of Proposed Framework



Source: Own Illustration 2015

In the following figure the role of the individual actors has been depicted:

Figure 13: Actor Categorization and Description of Actors Role in the Proposed Framework



Source: Own Illustration 2015

## Features and Functionality

Functionalities consist of the main features and tasks of the overall framework that will be used and accessed by various users. Functionality accessibility depends on the various user authorizations as mentioned earlier. Following figure shows all the functionality that has been confined within the proposed framework.

**Figure 14: Feature and Functionalities of proposed Framework**



Source: Own Illustration, 2015

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The features and functionality has been explained briefly:

This functionality will provide the travellers with a subscription option where they can subscribe and receive the updates for the Indian Tourism contents.

### **e-Newsletters**

E-newsletter functionality is a very important part of this framework where subscribed users will be able to receive personalized newsletter about the promotions and offers. This will keep them hooked into travelling India.

### **Itinerary Builder**

Tourists will have the functionality to build their own itinerary of preference. This will be a smart application functionality where depending on the destination, preference and duration of stay of the travellers the itinerary will be customized and prepared.

### **User Profiling**

User profiling for the tourist and the travel agents should be another crucial functionality that is being taken into consideration. All the subscribers (Tourists) and the travel agents along with the management users will be profiled.

### **Tourist Tracker**

A Mobile application functionality that will track the respective tourist via their check-in. TBI can even partner with current mobile applications and this functionality can be embedded to get to know the favourite places for the tourists visiting India from UK.

### **Data Repository**

All the collected data will be stored into a single data repository and further modules will be developed to utilise this data to gain insights and strategic business decisions.

### **Strategic Partnership**

This functionality will allow strategic Partnership amongst the tourism Board of India, Subsidiary travel bodies and authorities and the assigned travel agents by active participation of them in the tourism initiative. This functionality will help create the Win-Win Situation for both TBI and the travel agents associated with them.

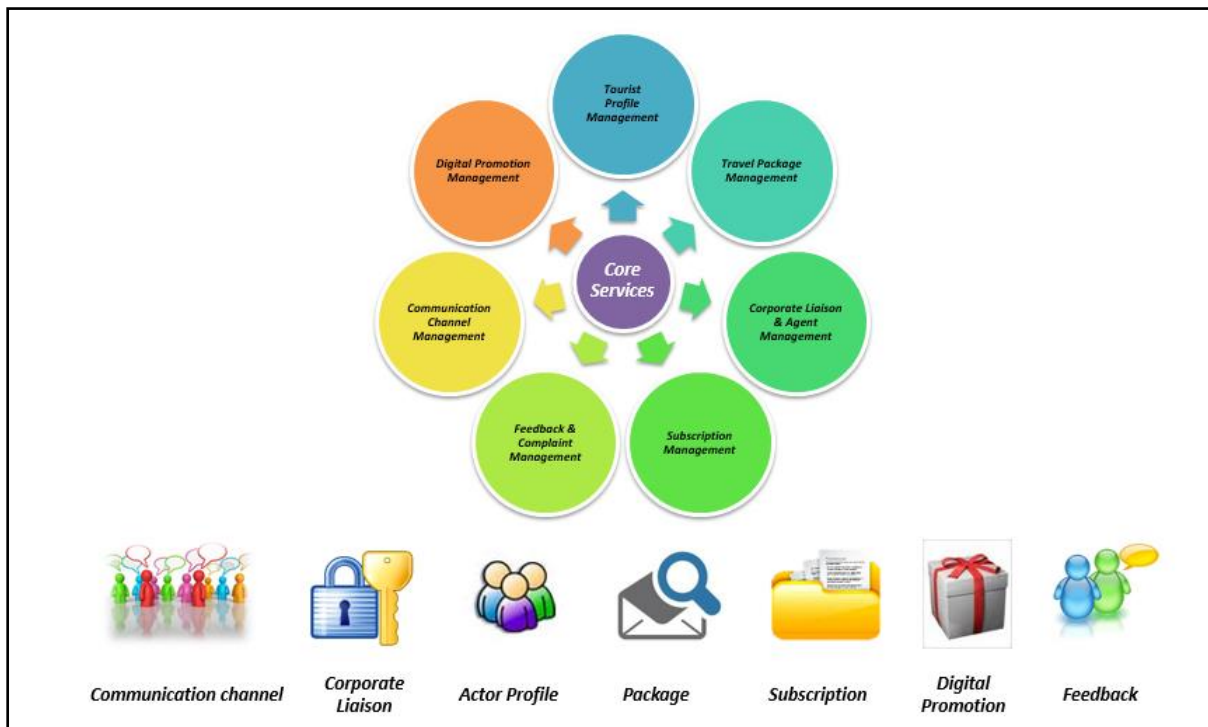
## Management Foundation (Modules)

Management Foundation are the management module that should be integrated together in this platform that has been introduced to this proposed framework of E-Marketing Capacity enhancement for tourism board of India, UK.

Management foundation has been laid on the following module:

- TouristProfile Management
- Travel Package Management
- Corporate Liaison & Agent Management
- Subscription Management
- Feedback & Complaint Management
- Communication Channel Management
- Digital Promotion Management

**Figure 16: Management Modules of Proposed Framework**



Source: Own Illustration 2015

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In the following all these modules are being discussed.

### **Actor Profile Management**

The actors in this framework are Tourists, Travel Agents, Management Users and Authority of Tourism board of India and the Administrators. Although all the profiles will be managed but mainly the Tourist Profile will be further dig deep for predictive analysis and Sentimental analysis purpose.

### **Travel Package Management**

Since, the proposed framework is focused on the augmentation to the e-marketing capacity planning for the tourism of India, it is important to ensure that there are sufficient packages available for the tourists to opt for.

### **Corporate Liaison & Agent Management**

Corporate Liaison will focus on managing the overall strategic partnership with the travel agents, Social Media Companies and any other third-party companies who plays the pivotal role as the actor for the framework.

### **Subscription Management**

This module namely subscription management will manage and monitor the subscription of the tourists in the various provided services such as newsletter, tourist trackers etc. This helps track the value and importance of the various services and create leads for the TBI and Travel Agents.

### **Feedback & Complaint Management**

Especially due to the security issues many youths are choosing other places in Asia rather than India. There is no proper channel of feedback of travel experience and complaint management module currently. That is why is it very important to have feedback and Complaint Management module in the proposed framework where the necessary complaints and feedback will be escalated to the right person at the right time.

### **Digital Promotion Management**

Digital promotion management are the most crucial module to achieve the objective of e-marketing capacity enhancement with the aids of Social Media Tools and technology. Digital

promotions is the means of attracting the consumers to the site as well as promoting Indian Tourism altogether.

### **COM (Communication) Channel Management**

Communication channel management is very important part which will make sure that various communication channel among the application services and the collaborative platform is being managed in a very accessible but controlled manner. Tourists will communicate with various applications besides the management of Tourism Board of India and authorized travel agents. Social network Integration is the key tools for the communication channels to the tourist besides having multiple other channels for in house communication and collaboration along with travel agent. E-marketing plans and Promotion are all disseminated through this communication channels itself.

### **Application Services**

There are various application services that will further be triggered and monitored for better performance outcome of the proposed module and framework enablement. Predictive analysis, Sentimental Analysis, Event Monitoring, Promotional Insights to measure and monitor the promotional initiatives and the ROI of those promotions, KPI Monitoring and Result Driven benchmarking are some of the few key application services that has been included in this framework.

**Figure 18: Application Services**



Source: Own Illustration 2015

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Each of these are being explained briefly:

### **Predictive Analysis for Tourist and Destinations**

Predictive analysis for tourist and destinations will help the tourism board of India to forecast the number of the attracted tourists and the destinations in trend. There are many a tool available in the market in context to the predictive analysis. This statistics that will be gathered with the data being pumped in from the participatory applications will be helpful to preparation the promotional plans. The delivery of the Tourism services from the tourism board of India will be much more aligned to the expectations of the tourist of UK that will eventually help attract more tourists and gain more revenues for sure.

### **Sentimental Analysis**

With the Feedback and Complaint management module and the social Media Crawling sentimental analysis can be performed and the positive negative and pros and cons of the development can be brought into spotlight. This sentimental analysis can also help plan the overall security deployment in specific places of interest from tourist point of view.

### **Event Monitoring**

With the advent of technology and integration of internet to the mobile devices, various event monitoring and notification services are common place. Exception monitoring can be performed with this service and anything that is not aligned to the best practices as planned strategically can be monitored over here.

### **Promotion Insights**

Promotion insights plays a pivotal role in the overall E-Marketing Capacity Enhancement Framework. The data will be mainly associated with various KPI (Key Performance Indicators) for specific Promotional Events, Tourism Initiatives and other strategic components of the program. Various Result driven benchmarking will also be performed to make sure the Promotional Programs that has been planned and delivered are effective enough to the targeted audience. Event monitoring via alerts and notifications are some features of the application services that will be closely monitored by the national authority as indicated above.

### **KPI Monitoring & Result-Driven Benchmarking**



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KPI Monitoring and Result Driven benchmarking, the outcome of the specific Tourism / Promotional programs will be analysed and this outcome will lead to the fact-based strategic decision making for the further continual of the similar Promotional Events or not. Gradually, this fact-based decision making will results into the 360 degree view of the tourists of UK visiting India, their needs, and will lead the Promotional programs to reach the right audience at the right time with the right program.

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