INCREASING PATIENT ENGAGEMENT AND FOOTFALL IN SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION UNITS THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING AND REFERRAL NETWORKS

Dissertation Submitted to

The IIHMR University, Jaipur

for the partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of

Master of Business Administration (MBA)

in

Pharmaceutical Management

by

Suvikram Tiwari

Under the Supervision and Guidance of

Dr. Saurabh Kumar

2025

SRI KANCHI KAMAKOTI MEDICAL TRUST
SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION, INDIA

INTERNSHIP COMPLETION CERTIFICATE

The certificate is awarded to

Mr. Suvikram Tiwari

In recognition of having successfully completed his
Internship in the department of

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

and has successfully completed his Project on

Increasing Patient Engagement and Footfall in Sankara Eye Foundation Units through Digital Marketing and Referral Networks

17th March 2025 to 13th June 2025

Organization: SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION INDIA

He comes across as a committed, sincere & diligent person who has a strong drive and zeal for learning

We wish him all the best for future endeavours

Ms. Srini Karthikeyan
Chief People Officer

Mr. Bharath Balasubramaniam
President - Operations

IIHMR UNIVERSITY

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that dissertation titled **INCREASING PATIENT ENGAGEMENT AND FOOTFALL IN SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION UNITS THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING AND REFERRAL NETWORKS** is a record of the research work undertaken by **SUVIKRAM TIWARI** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MBA (Pharmaceutical Management) from the IIHMR University, Jaipur under my guidance and supervision and her approach to the research study has been sincere, scientific, and analytical.

Faculty Guide:
Dr. Saurabh Kumar Banerjee
IIHMR University, Jaipur
Date: 19.06.2025

School Dean:
Dr. Saurabh Kumar Banerjee
IIHMR University, Jaipur
Date: 19.06.2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled **Increasing Patient Engagement and Footfall in Sankara Eye Foundation Units through Digital Marketing and Referral Networks** is the bonafide record of my original research work. I declare that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.

(Signature)

Name of Student Swikram Tiwari

Date 0585

ABSTRACT

Title:
Increasing Patient Engagement and Footfall in Sankara Eye Foundation Units through Digital Marketing and Referral Networks

Author Name: Suvikram Tiwari

Advisor Name: Mr. Narendra Marathe (head marketing)

Background:
Despite India's healthcare advancements, many specialty hospitals like Sankara Eye Foundation (SEFI) face challenges in sustaining patient engagement and maximizing footfall across their units. SEFI, operating 14 regional hospitals, observed a plateau in patient volumes, necessitating localized strategies to enhance visibility and accessibility.

Objective:
To design and implement innovative, scalable strategies combining digital marketing and strengthened referral networks, aimed at increasing patient footfall by 20-30% across SEFI 14 units within six months.

Methodology:
The study employed mixed methods, including surveys of patients, doctors, and marketers; digital audits of SEFI online presence; hospital data analysis; and stakeholder interviews. Primary data was supplemented with case studies of healthcare marketing best practices. A phased strategy was developed, incorporating hyperlocal SEO, social media campaigns, WhatsApp outreach, and community-based referral programs.

Results/Findings:
Digital-first units (e.g., Bangalore, Hyderabad) are projected to achieve up to 25% growth in footfall via enhanced digital engagement, while traditional-focused units (e.g., Guntur, Varanasi) are forecasted to grow by 15-20% through grassroots outreach. Key challenges included gaps in digital platforms, inconsistent referral tracking, and cultural barriers in multilingual regions. Best practices observed were the synergy of print and digital campaigns, influencer collaborations, and satisfaction-driven recall programs.

Conclusions:
A blended strategy integrating digital innovations with grassroots outreach emerged as essential for SEF's sustainable growth. The study recommends institutionalizing referral programs, strengthening data-driven decision-making, and enhancing patient-centric communication to ensure long-term engagement and access across diverse patient demographics.

Keywords:
Patient Footfall, Digital Marketing, Referral Networks, Eye Care, Healthcare Outreach, SEF, SEO, Telemedicine, Community Engagement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have supported and guided me throughout the journey of completing my thesis titled **"Increasing Patient Engagement and Footfall in Sankara Eye Foundation Units through Digital Marketing and Referral Networks."**

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to **Sankara Eye Foundation India** for giving me the opportunity to intern with their esteemed organization and for granting access to valuable institutional data and on-ground insights. I am especially grateful to the **Business Development team**, whose constant support and direction helped me gain a deeper understanding of real-time challenges and strategies in healthcare marketing.

I am deeply thankful to my academic guide, **NARENDRA MARATHE SIR,** for their constant encouragement, timely feedback, and insightful suggestions that greatly enhanced the quality and clarity of this work.

My sincere thanks to the **faculty members of Dr. SAURABH KUMAR BANERJEE/IIHMR UNIVERSITY]**, who have enriched my academic knowledge and equipped me with the skills required to undertake this research.

I also express my appreciation to the **doctors, patients, marketing team members, and referring practitioners** who participated in the survey and shared their time, perspectives, and experiences, which became the foundation of this research.

Finally, I am immensely grateful to my **family and friends** for their unwavering support, motivation, and patience during this academic endeavour.

This work would not have been possible without the contributions of each of the above individuals, and I remain deeply indebted to them all.

Thankyou
Sincerely,

Suvikram Tiwari
0585, PM15

TABLE OF CONTENT

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER -1
INTRODUCTION

INCREASING PATIENT ENGAGEMENT AND FOOTFALL IN SANKARA EYE FOUNDATION UNITS THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING AND REFERRAL NETWORKS.

Prepared for: SEFI Leadership • **Prepared by:** Suvikram Tiwari • **Date:** April 2025

1.1 Executive Summary

Over the next 6 months, SEFI aims to increase patient footfall by **20–30%** across its 14 hospitals through tailored digital and traditional outreach. Advanced markets (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur) will leverage strong online engagement – optimizing SEO, Google Business presence, social media, and telemedicine – while other regions (Guntur, Varanasi, Anand, Kanpur, Krishnankoil, Shimoga, Panvel, Coimbatore, RS Puram, Ludhiana) will emphasize local outreach: vision camps, community partnerships, local media and patient referral programs. Patient surveys and digital audits inform these city-specific strategies, ensuring alignment with local demographics and needs. We forecast a phased growth in monthly patient visits, supported by targeted KPIs (website traffic, appointment conversions, outreach event attendance, referral rates, and satisfaction metrics). Key anticipated outcomes include stronger brand visibility, higher retention (through newsletters and recalls), and the stated 20–30% footfall increase. For example, ~75% of prospective patients now begin their provider search online, so improving SEFI digital footprint is expected to capture significant new volume. Simultaneously, traditional engagement (camps, media) drives awareness in underpenetrated areas. By integrating data-driven insights with best-practice marketing – such as social media campaigns (low-cost, high-impact) and patient referral programs – SEFI is well-positioned to meet its growth objectives and ensure sustainable patient engagement.

1.2 Introduction

Sankara Eye Foundation (SEFI) is one of the world's largest free eye-care networks, serving millions annually. India faces a massive cataract backlog – the World Health Organization reports ~22 million blind eyes in India, 80% due to cataract – highlighting the critical demand for accessible eye services. with capacity for over 630,000 free surgeries per year. Despite this scale, some SEFI hospitals have plateaued in patient volume due to uneven outreach and evolving patient behaviors. Many potential patients (especially younger, urban populations) rely on online search and digital channels before choosing a healthcare provider. Others in smaller towns still seek care through local referrals and community programs. The challenge is to revitalize patient engagement at all SEFI hospitals by using the right mix of strategies for each locale – boosting visibility, building trust, and converting interest into visits. This report outlines objectives, methodologies, and detailed city-level plans to achieve a 20–30% increase in patient footfall within 6 months.

1.3 Problem Statement

Across SEFI network, certain hospitals underperform relative to capacity. Key issues include low brand awareness in target communities, underutilized digital presence, and inconsistent follow-up with existing patients. For instance, many patients do not receive regular reminders or educational outreach after initial visits, leading to attrition. Marketing research indicates that failure to engage patients between visits is a missed opportunity: consistent newsletters and recall campaigns can build stronger relationships with doctors and without these, patient loyalty and word-of-mouth growth suffer. Similarly, poor online reputation can deter patients: 74% of patients consider reviews very important and 69% will avoid providers with an average rating below 4.0. Several SEFI units lack active review monitoring or Google Business optimization, impeding discovery when patients search online. Traditional outreach has also lagged; many rural and semi-urban centers have not held regular vision camps or local partnerships, limiting community awareness of SEFI services. In summary, the problem is **insufficient patient engagement and visibility** both digitally and locally resulting in suboptimal footfall relative to potential.

1.4 Objectives

1. **Increase Monthly Footfall by 20–30%**: Achieve targeted growth in outpatient visits and surgeries for each hospital within 6 months.
2. **Enhance Digital Presence (Advanced Cities)**: For Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, and Jaipur, optimize SEO, Google Business Profiles, social media, and online appointment tools to capture tech-savvy patients.
3. **Strengthen Community Outreach (Traditional Cities)**: For the other 10 locations, implement vision camps, local advertising (print, radio, hoardings), doctor-referral networks, and school/worksite screenings to boost local awareness.
4. **Boost Patient Retention**: Deploy regular patient newsletters, automated recall/reminder campaigns (calls, SMS, email), and satisfaction surveys to drive repeat visits.
5. **Monitor Key Performance Indicators**: Establish metrics (website traffic, digital campaign ROI, social engagement, number of leads, patient satisfaction scores) to track progress. Ensure each strategy has measurable outcomes.
6. **Project Footfall Numbers**: Provide realistic monthly footfall estimates per hospital, aligning with the 20–30% growth target.

CHAPTER - 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature review-

- **Digital Marketing in Healthcare**
  Digital marketing has become an indispensable tool for healthcare providers aiming to enhance patient acquisition and retention. In India, the integration of digital strategies has shown significant promise as there have been direct leads generated via social media platforms.

- **Online Search Behavior**: A study indicates that 70% of urban patients in India conduct online research on doctors before scheduling an appointment. Moreover, 83% of patients utilize hospital websites, and 77% rely on search engines to seek healthcare information as everything has been searched on these platforms to seek their optimum benefits.

- **Impact on Patient Appointments**: hospitals investing in SEO have observed a 40% rise in patient appointments within six months as SEO will enhance Sankara's online visibility and patient engagement by implementing targeted SEO techniques.

- **Keyword Optimization**: Identifying and integrating industry-specific keywords such as "Lasik Surgery in Coimbatore" and "Retina Surgery in Coimbatore" to improve search engine rankings.

- **On-Page Enhancements**: Optimizing meta titles, descriptions, H1 tags, and image alt texts to align with SEO best practices.

- **Local SEO Focus**: Claiming and updating Google My Business listings with accurate information, including operating hours, contact details, and patient reviews, to boost local search visibility.

- **Content Marketing**: Creating informative blog posts and articles addressing common eye health concerns to establish authority and drive organic traffic.

2.2 Implications for SEFI

The successful SEO implementation has not only increased patient appointments but also amplified SEFI mission-driven initiatives:

- **Expanded Reach**: Enhanced online visibility has facilitated greater awareness of SEFI "Gift of Vision" program, leading to increased participation in free eye screening camps.
- **Community Impact**: Improved digital engagement has contributed to SEFI goal of delivering high-quality eye care services to underserved populations across India.
- **Social Media Influence**: Over 60% of internet users in India follow healthcare-related accounts, highlighting the potential of social media platforms in patient engagement as users are wanting to have a proper knowledge of everything, they invest their money, so they follow healthcare related accounts that are showcasing patient's testimonial and that leverage the users trust in Sankara eye foundation India.

- **Email Marketing ROI**: Email marketing has demonstrated a high return on investment, with an average ROI of 4,400%, making it a cost-effective channel for patient communication.

- **Physician and Optometrist Referral Networks**
  Referral networks are vital for increasing patient footfall. Collaborations between hospitals and local physicians or optometrists facilitate patient referrals for specialized care. These networks rely on strong relationships and efficient communication channels to ensure seamless patient transitions.
  In India, initiatives like Reach52 have expanded operations to connect underserved regions with healthcare services. By leveraging community health workers and sales teams, Reach52 distributes health products and provides data for targeted health campaigns, reaching 26,000 rural healthcare facilities and engaging half a million people monthly.

- **Case Studies of Similar Initiatives in India**
  Sanjivani Ayurveda Hospital
  Sanjivani Ayurveda Hospital faced challenges in digital marketing, leading to low lead generation and conversions. By partnering with a digital marketing agency, they implemented a comprehensive strategy encompassing social media marketing and video content creation. This led to a significant increase in leads and higher conversion rates, resulting in revenue growth and service expansion.

2.3 Gaps in Existing Literature

While digital marketing and referral networks have shown promise in enhancing patient engagement, several gaps remain:

- **Integration of Digital Strategies**: Limited research exists on the integration of digital marketing with traditional referral networks, particularly in the context of eye care services in India.
- **Long-term Impact Studies**: There is a lack of longitudinal studies assessing the sustained impact of digital marketing initiatives on patient retention and satisfaction.
- **Personalization and AI Utilization**: The application of AI and personalized content in healthcare marketing is emerging, but comprehensive studies evaluating their effectiveness are scarce.
- **Data on Rural Outreach**: More data is needed on the effectiveness of digital strategies in rural and underserved areas, where internet penetration and digital literacy may be limited.

CHAPTER – 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

- **Digital Audits**: A comprehensive digital audit of SEFI existing online presence was conducted, assessing website usability, SEO performance, Google My Business listings, and social media activity. The review also involved competitor benchmarking and observational research on digital healthcare marketing practices.
- **Hospital Data Analysis**: Existing patient footfall data including breakdowns by walk-in, referrals, and digital arrivals were collected directly from SEFI internal records and hospital management systems. This data served as the baseline for footfall analysis and future projections. The data was segmented by location, patient type, and channel of arrival to model growth and strategize interventions.
- **Stakeholder Interviews**: In-depth interviews were conducted with hospital administrators, doctors, marketing teams, and referral partners to collect qualitative insights on existing referral networks, patient journey touchpoints, and local outreach gaps.
- **Pilot Campaigns**: Where feasible, run small-scale digital ads or community events in 1–2 hospitals to test response. Use real-time data (e.g. form submissions, event attendance) to iterate strategies before full rollout.

3.2 Strategic Approach

Cities with Advanced Digital Strategy (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur)

❖ **Bangalore - Hyperlocal SEO & Google My Business Optimization**

- Optimize the hospital's Google My Business profile with accurate location details, operating hours, and services offered.
- Incorporate local keywords such as "best eye hospital in Bangalore" into website content to enhance search visibility.
- Encourage satisfied patients to leave positive reviews on platforms like Google.

Influencer Collaborations

- Partner with local health influencers and bloggers to share authentic experiences and testimonials.
- Utilize platforms like Instagram and YouTube to reach a broader audience.

Interactive Social Media Campaigns

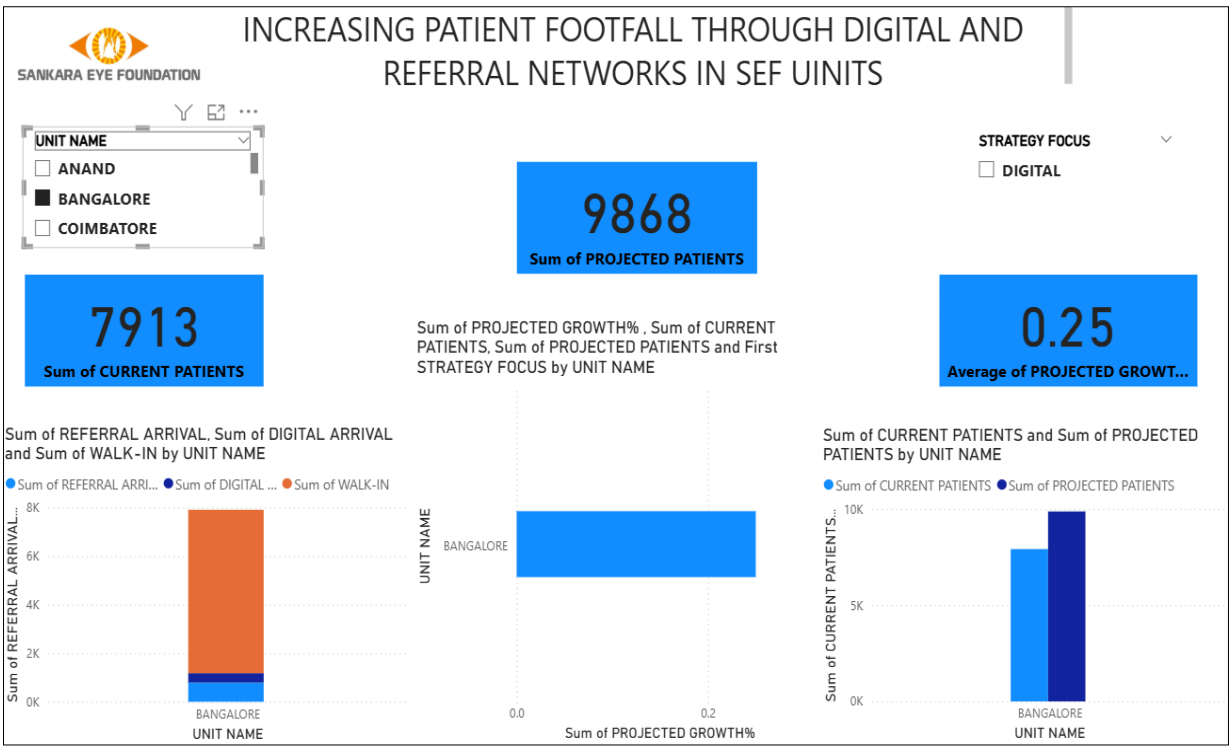
- Launch campaigns like "Eye Health Tips of the Week" or "Patient Success Stories."
- Host live Q&A sessions with ophthalmologists to engage the community.

Video Marketing Initiatives

- Produce videos highlighting advanced surgical procedures, patient journeys, and doctor introductions.
- Share these videos on YouTube and social media platforms to educate and engage potential patients.

- **Target Demographics:** Urban, tech-savvy individuals aged 25–45.
- **Targeted Audience on Site:** Professionals, young adults, and families seeking advanced eye care.
- **Railway Station:** KSR Bengaluru City Railway Station – approximately 20 km.
- **Airport:** Kempegowda International Airport – approximately 45 km.
- **Awareness Platforms:** Google My Business, Practo, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook.

Figure 3.1 Power BI Dashboard: Digital strategy implementation



❖ **Hyderabad**: **Multilingual Website and Content**

- Offer website content and blogs in English, Telugu, and Urdu to cater to the diverse linguistic population.
- Ensure that appointment booking and inquiry forms are accessible in multiple languages.

Social Media Engagement

- Use platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share health tips, patient testimonials, and live sessions with doctors.
- Engage with the audience by responding to comments and messages regularly.

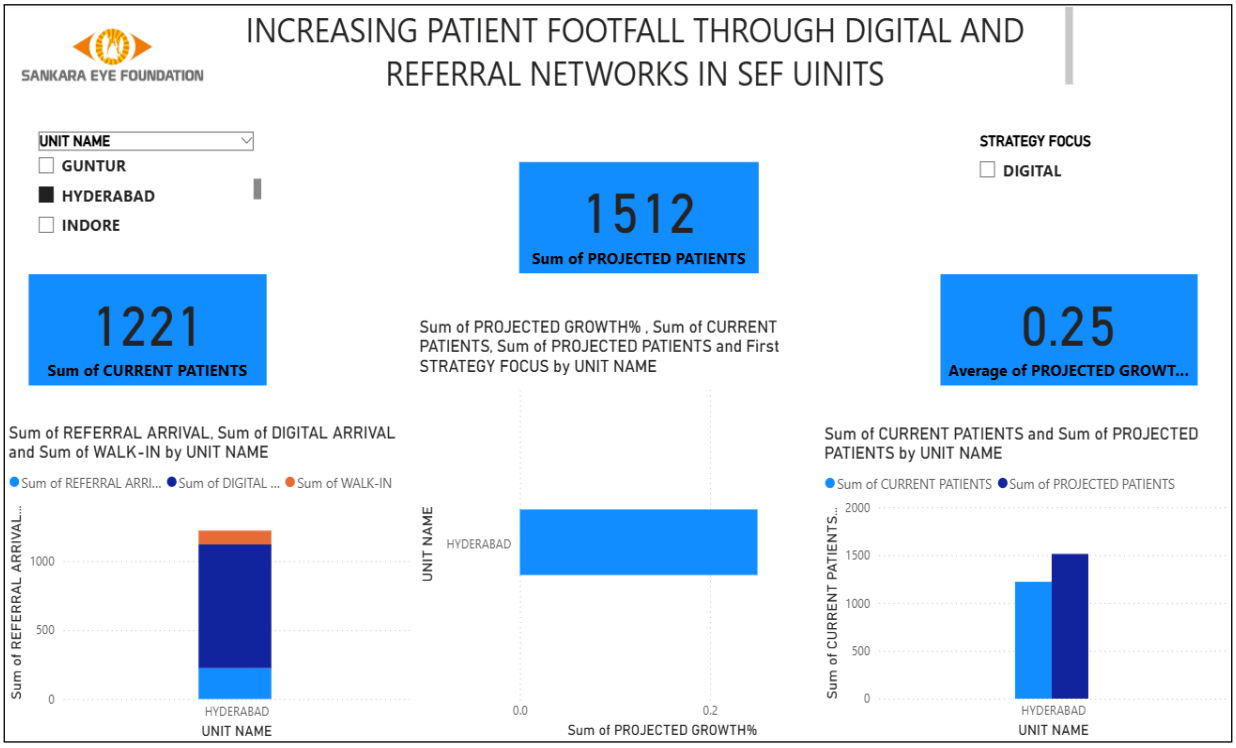
Telemedicine Promotion

- Highlight teleconsultation services for patients in remote areas.
- Use targeted ads to inform about the convenience and accessibility of virtual consultations.

Influencer Partnerships

- Collaborate with healthcare influencers, local celebrities, or health bloggers to promote the hospital's services.
- Influencer partnerships can reach and attract more patients.
  Target Demographics: Multilingual urban population aged 25–55.
- **Transportation:**
- **Railway Station:** Hyderabad Deccan Station (Nampally).
- **Airport:** Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (approx. 33 km from city center).
- **Awareness Platforms:** Multilingual website (English, Telugu, Urdu), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, telemedicine promotions.

Figure 3.2: Power BI Dashboard Multilingual Digital Campaign: Hyderabad Unit



❖ **Indore**: **Building Trust in Emerging Markets**

Educational Content Marketing

- Create informative blog posts and videos addressing common eye health concerns.
- Share patient testimonials to build credibility and trust.

Local Language Engagement

- Develop content in Hindi to cater to the local population.
- Use regional dialects in social media posts and advertisements to enhance relatability.

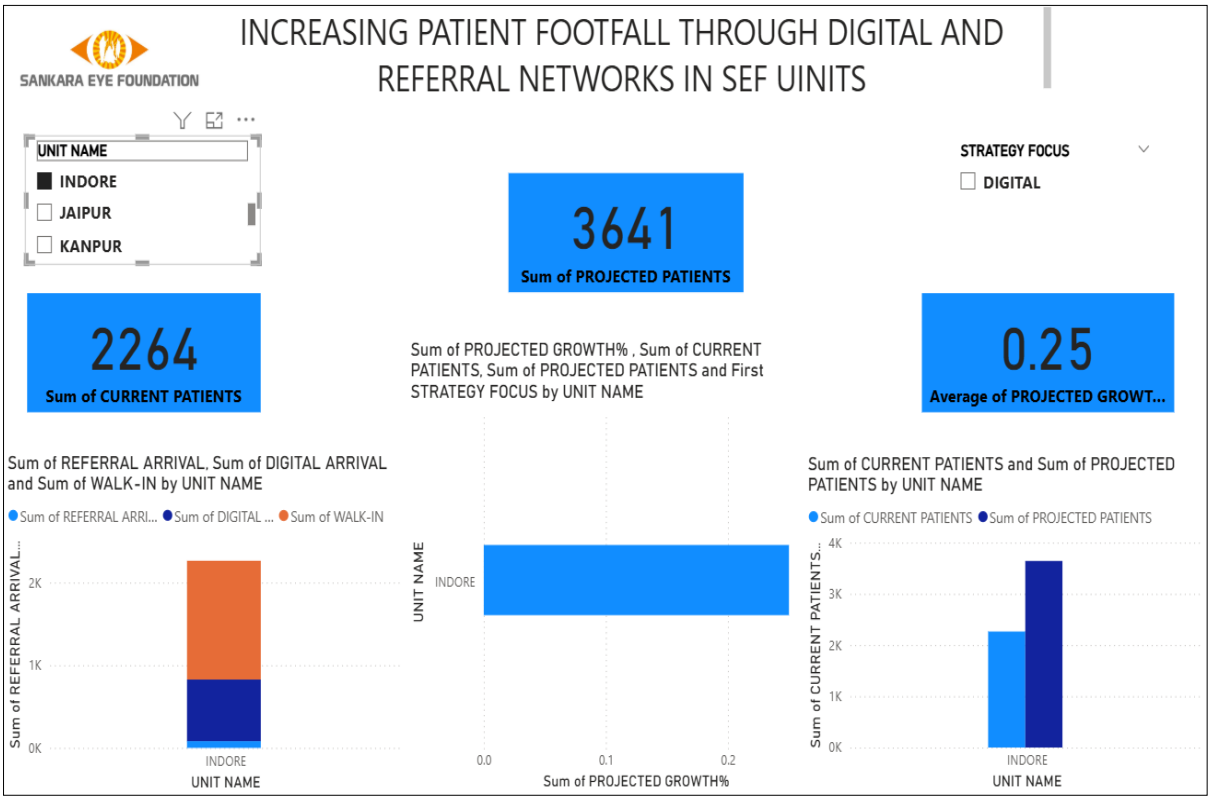
Community Outreach via WhatsApp

- Share appointment reminders, health tips, and promotional offers through WhatsApp broadcasts.
- Encourage patients to share their experiences within their networks to increase referrals.

Local SEO Optimization

- Optimize the hospital's online presence for local search queries to attract nearby patients.
- Ensure consistent NAP (Name, Address, Phone number) information across all online directories.
  Target Demographics: Families and elderly individuals aged 35–60.
- **Transportation:**
- **Railway Station:** Indore Junction (approx. 3 km from city center).
- **Airport:** Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Airport (approx. 1 km from city center).
- **Awareness Platforms:** WhatsApp, Hindi-language content, local newspapers, community outreach.

Figure 3.3: Power BI Dashboard – WhatsApp Community Outreach: Indore Unit



❖ **Jaipur: Cultural Event Participation**

- Participate in local festivals and community events to increase brand visibility.
- Offer free eye check-up camps during these events to attract attendees.

Print and Digital Synergy

- Advertise in local newspapers and magazines, complemented by digital ads on social media.
- Use QR code in print materials that direct readers to the hospital's website or appointment booking page.

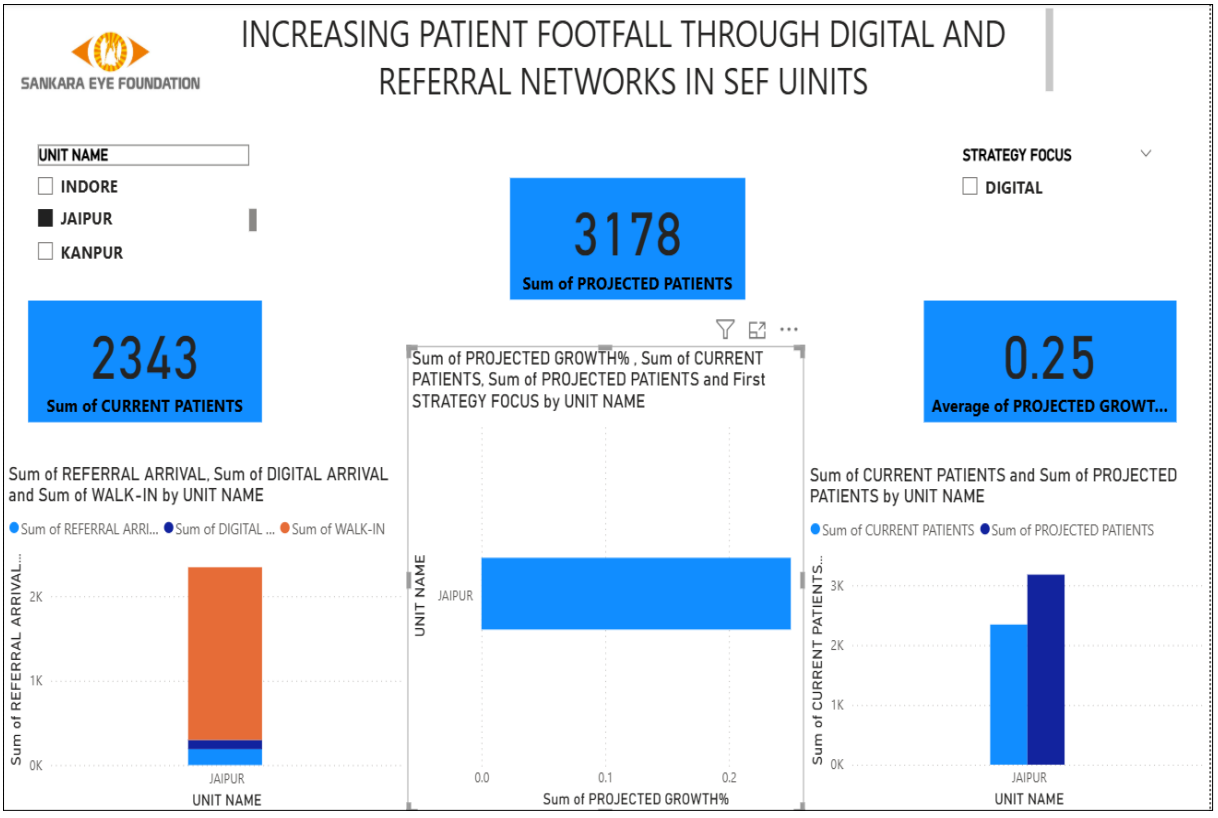
Local Influencer Engagement

- Collaborate with local artists, educators, and community leaders to promote eye health awareness.
- Feature their endorsements and experiences on social media and the hospital's website.

Online Reputation Management

- Monitor and respond to reviews on platforms like Google.
- Address negative feedback promptly and professionally to maintain a positive online image.
- **Target Demographics:** Families and elderly individuals aged 35–60.
- **Transportation:**
- **Railway Station:** Jaipur Junction (approx. 4 km from City Palace).
- **Airport:** Jaipur International Airport (approx. 14 km from city center).
- **Awareness Platforms:** Local newspapers, community events, social media, online reputation management.

Figure 3.4: Power BI Dashboard – Cultural Integration Strategy: Jaipur Unit



Cities with Traditional Strategy

❖ **Guntur (AP)**:

Demographic Notes:

- Telugu-speaking audience
- Strong rural hinterland with many agriculture-based families
- Community-driven decisions, high trust in doctors and local leaders

Traditional Marketing Strategies:

Village Health Camps & Temple Tie-Ups

- Free eye check-ups in mandals and villages
- Use local temples and function halls for set-up.
- Leverage loudspeaker announcements in Telugu before the event.

Telugu Radio & Local TV Channel Ads

- FM/AM radio during farming hours (early morning, late evening)
- Health talk series with Sankara doctors on local cable channels.

Auto Rickshaw and Tractor Announcement Drives

- Customize messages in Telugu.
- Combine this with mobile leaflet distribution.

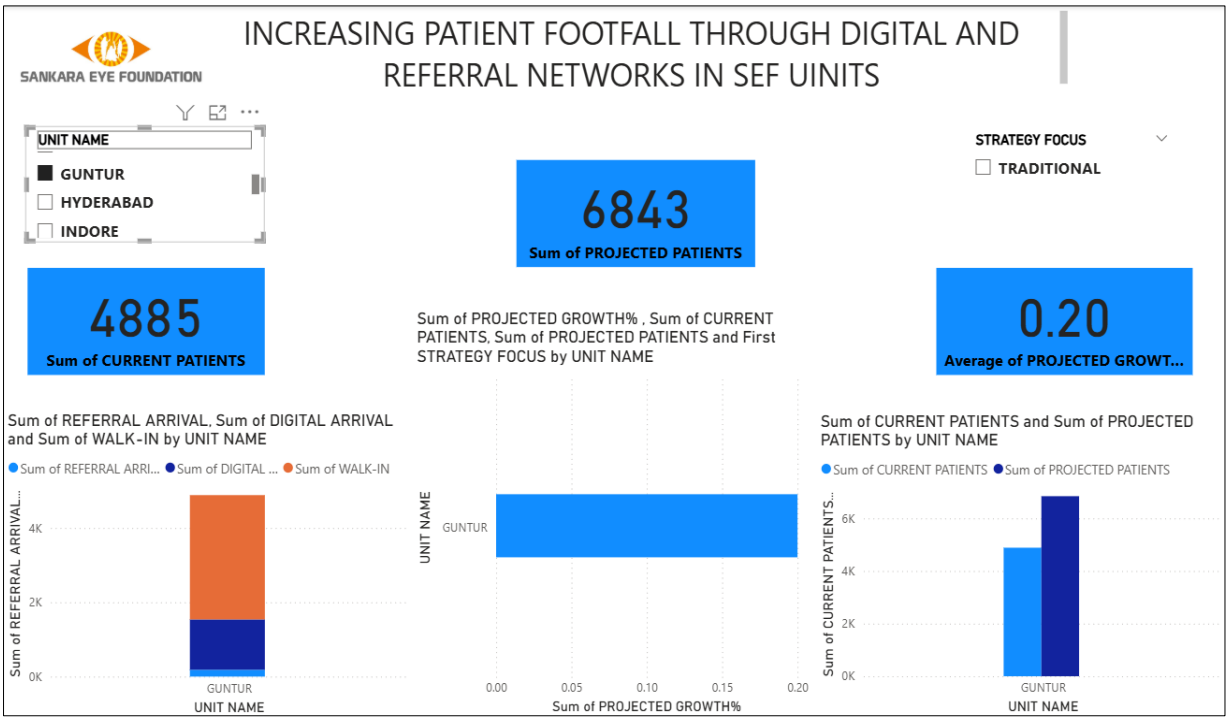
Posters in Marketplaces & Fertilizer Shops

- Eye care education + surgery subsidies
- Include a local contact number for booking appointments.

Partnership with Local Clinics, Medical Stores, and ANMs

- Distribute referral cards and brochures.
- Use Anganwadi centers and government health workers to spread awareness.

Figure 3.5: Power BI Dashboard – Traditional Outreach Summary: Guntur Unit



❖ **Varanasi (UP): Demographic Notes:**

- Hindi-speaking audience
- High footfall from pilgrims, rural surroundings, older population
- Trust in religious leaders and social workers

Traditional Marketing Strategies:

Health Camps in Ghats, Temples, and Schools

- Collaborate with temple trusts and local NGOs.
- Announce camps with traditional dhol-tasha style or loudspeakers.

Newspaper Advertorials & Hindi Flyers

- Local dailies like "Danik Jagran", "Hindustan"
- Focus on affordability, testimonials, and easy access.

Wall Murals in Villages and Slums

- Highlight "free checkup" or "low-cost cataract surgery".
- Use culturally resonant visuals and quotes.

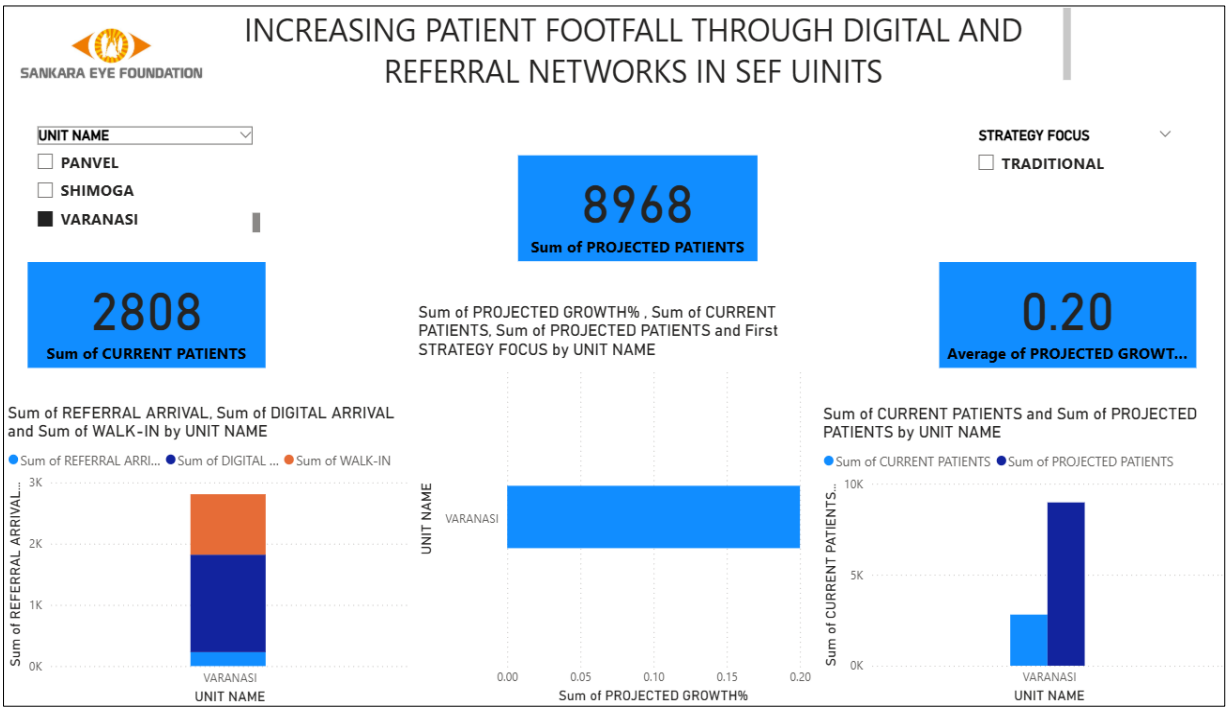
Auto and E-Rickshaw Hood Ads

- Place short, rhyming messages in Hindi.
- Announce daily patient timings or special camp days.

Doctor Outreach + Ayurveda Practitioners

- Many people still visit homeopathy/ayurveda clinics—tie up with them.
- Offer referral pads, posters for waiting areas.

Figure 3.6: Power BI Dashboard – Vision Camps and Religious Tie-Ups: Varanasi Unit



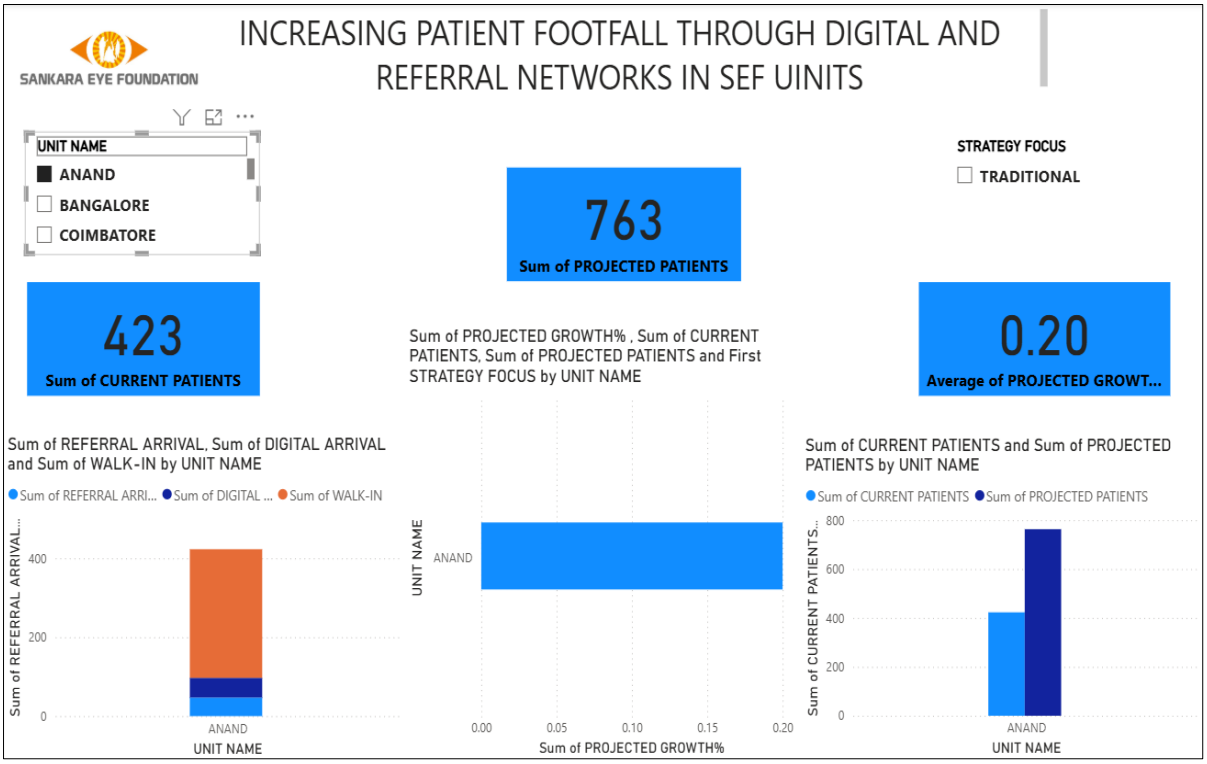
❖ **Anand (Gujarat)**:

❖ **Patient Profile:**
Semi-urban and rural mix, strong community networks, Gujarati-speaking population.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Eye Camps in Villages:** Target Anand's surrounding talukas.
- **Community Leader Engagement:** Work with panchayat heads and temple trustees.
- **Auto Announcements:** Mobile vans with loudspeakers about upcoming camps.
- **Local FM & Newspaper Ads:** Gujarati dailies like "Sandesh" or "Divya Bhaskar".
- **Wall Paintings:** Focus on eye health messages on rural roads and marketplaces.

Figure 3.7 Power BI Dashboard – Rural Referral Networks: Anand Unit



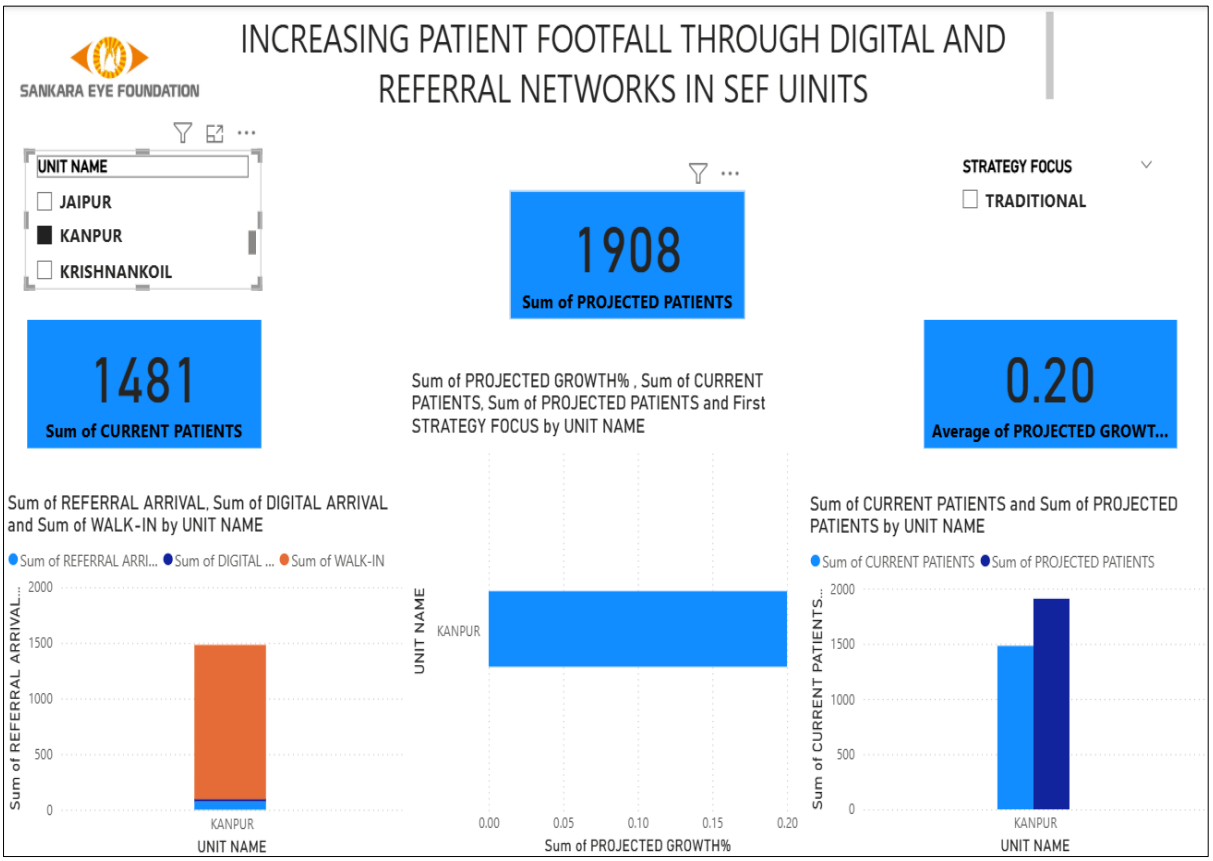
❖ **Kanpur (UP)**:

❖ **Patient Profile:**
Urban with rural catchment, high footfall potential, competitive healthcare environment.

Traditional Strategies:

- **General Physician Referral Program:** Kanpur has many local clinics—target them.
- **Newspaper Inserts in Hindi:** "Dainik Jagran", "Amar Ujala".
- **Bus Shelter & Rickshaw Ads:** High-volume urban transport can carry brand.
- **Free Screening Drives in Slums & Schools:** Partner with NGOs for mass outreach.
- **Religious Places Outreach:** Distribute flyers in temples/mosques.

Figure 3.8 Power BI Dashboard – GP Referrals and Print Media: Kanpur Unit



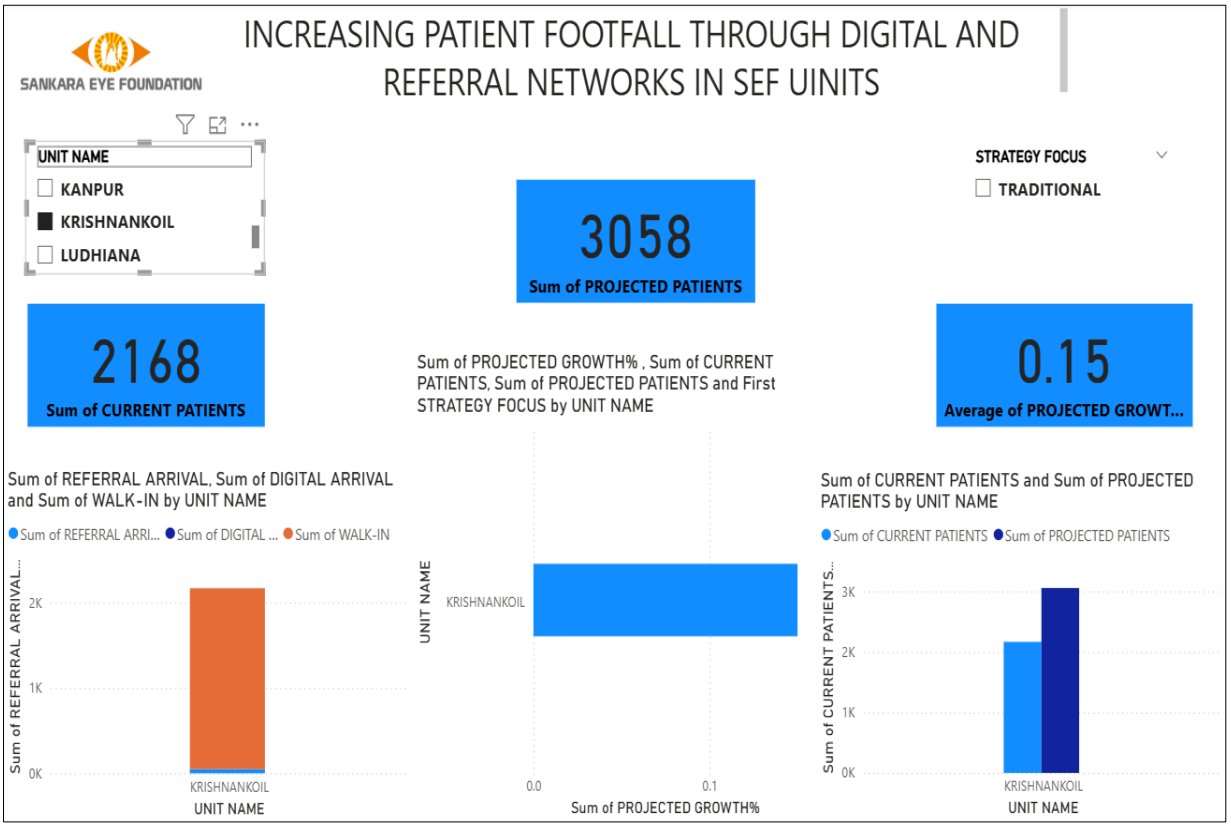
❖ **Krishnankoil (TN)**:

❖ **Patient Profile:**
Largely rural, local-language focused, limited exposure to online ads.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Village Health Outreach:** Camps in schools and village halls.
- **Posters in Panchayats and Ration Shops:** Popular public places.
- **Temple Announcements:** Work with local priests during festivals.
- **Auto & Bus Posters in Tamil:** Include map and directions to hospital.
- **Radio Awareness Campaigns in Tamil:** Use AIR (All India Radio) or local FM.

Figure 3.9: Power BI Dashboard – Local Language Campaign: Krishnankoil Unit



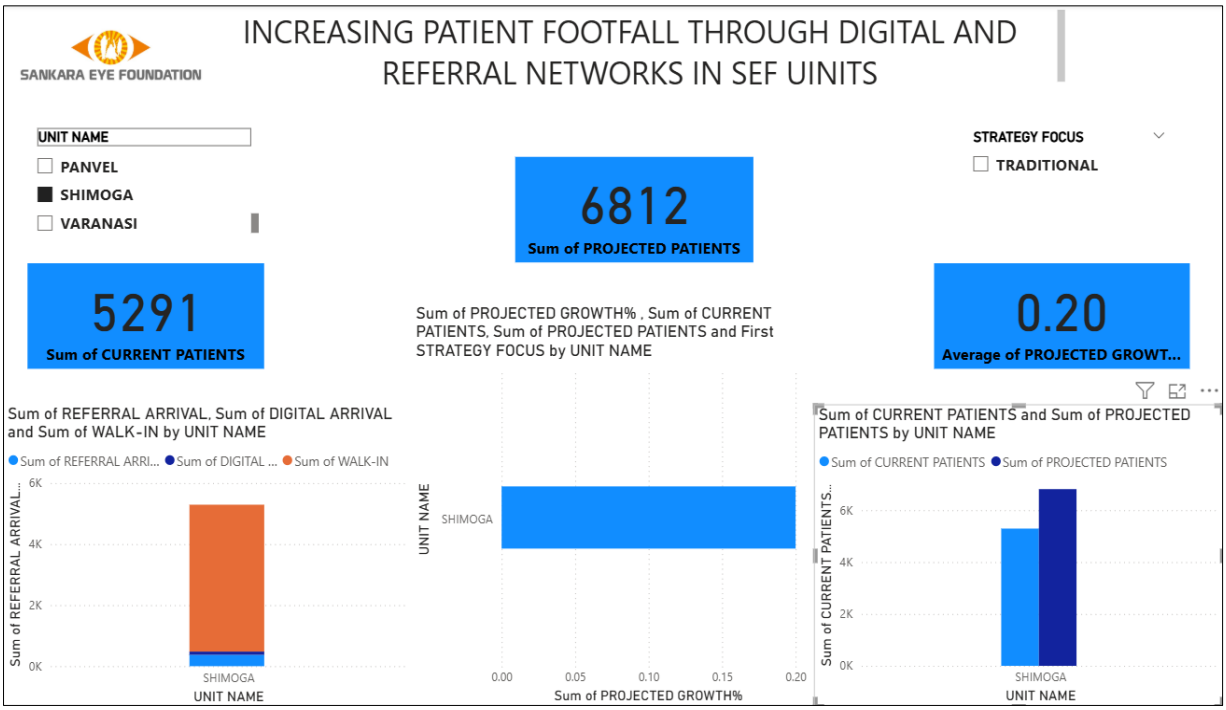
❖ **Shimoga (Karnataka)**:

❖ **Patient Profile:**
Tier 2 city with a rural hinterland, Kannada-speaking, high trust in government/NGO.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Kannada Wall Paintings & Posters:** Especially in Taluk centers and towns.
- **FM Radio Jingles in Kannada:** Local channels preferred over national.
- **Village Eye Camps with Panchayat Involvement.**
- **Local Cable TV Awareness Talks by Doctors.**
- **Bus Stop Ads and Local Market Flyers.**

Figure 3.10: Power BI Dashboard – Kannada Media and Wall Paintings: Shimoga Unit



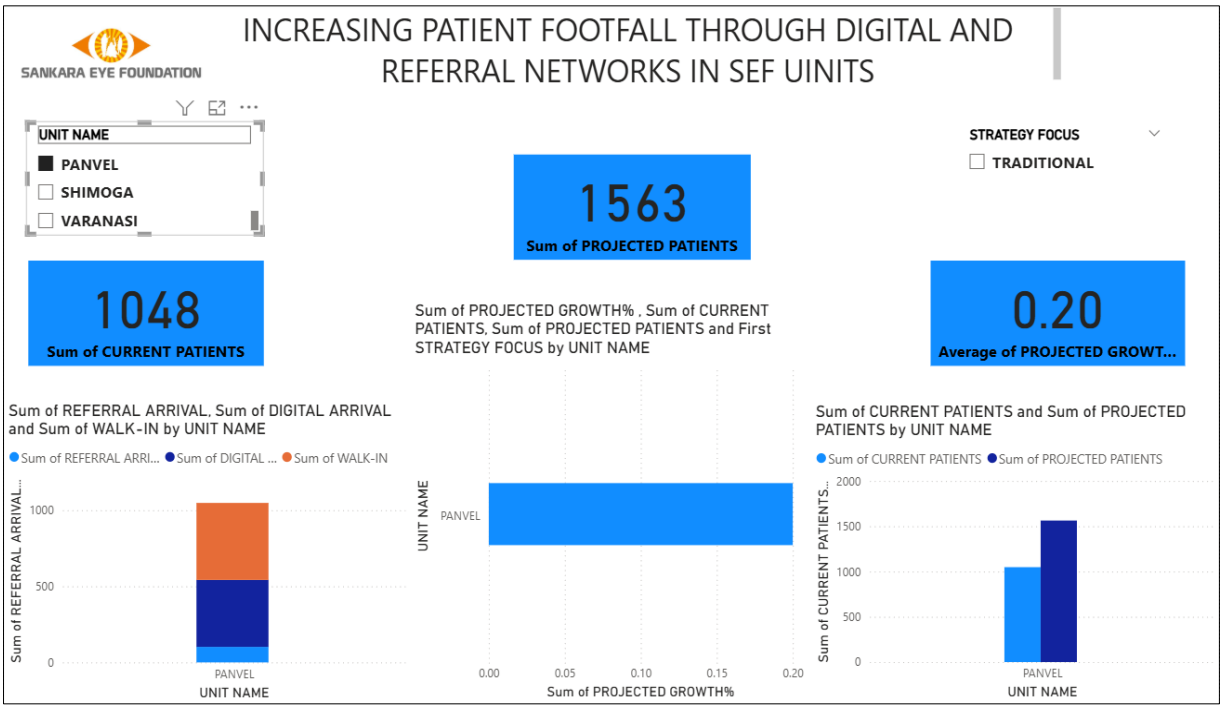
❖ **Panvel (Maharashtra)**:

❖ **Patient Profile:**
Peri-urban, mix of working-class and rural families, Marathi + Hindi audience.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Marathi Posters in Local Transport and Shops.**
- **Auto Rickshaw Hood Branding + Loudspeaker Campaigns.**
- **Railway Station Pamphlet Distribution.**
- **Local Newspaper Ads:** "Loksatta", "Maharashtra Times".
- **Medical Shop Tie-ups for Referral Cards.**

Figure 3.11: Power BI Dashboard – Auto and Shopfront Promotion: Panvel Unit



❖ **Coimbatore Unit and RS Puram (TN): Patient Profile:**
Urban, tech-savvy but still responsive to reputation/trust-based marketing.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Patient Referral Incentive Program (Word of Mouth).**
- **English/Tamil Newspaper Ads:** "The Hindu", "Dinamalar", "Dina Thanthi".
- **Corporate Tie-ups for Employee Screenings.**
- **Eye Care Talks at Rotary Clubs, Colleges, Churches.**
- **Premium Bus/Auto Branding in City Areas.**

Figure 3.12: Power BI Dashboard – Patient Referral and Print Synergy: Coimbatore Unit

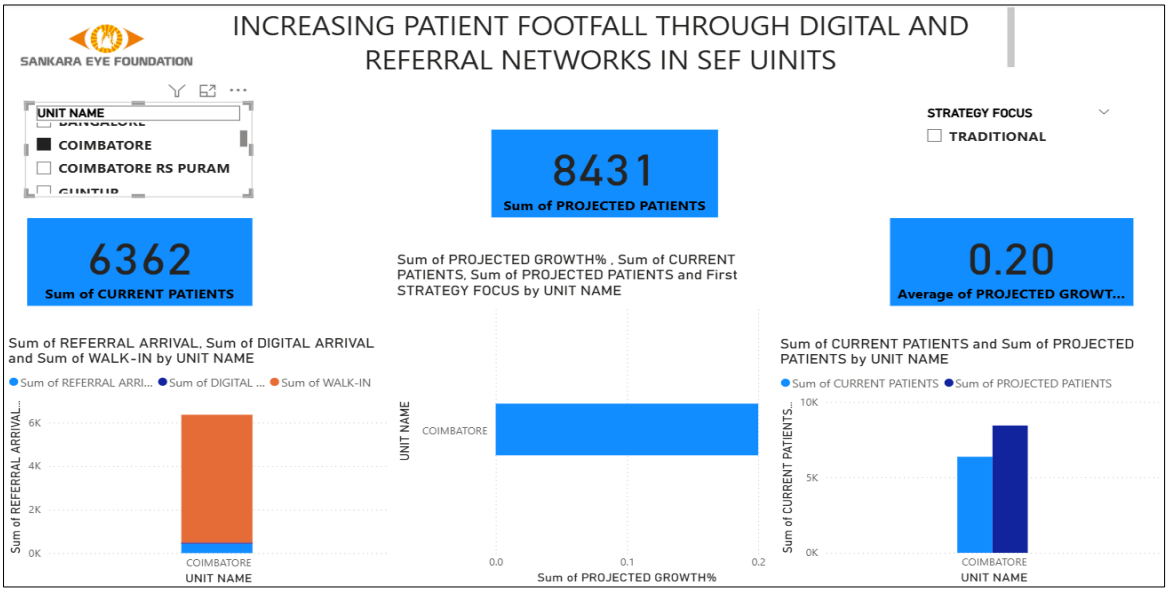
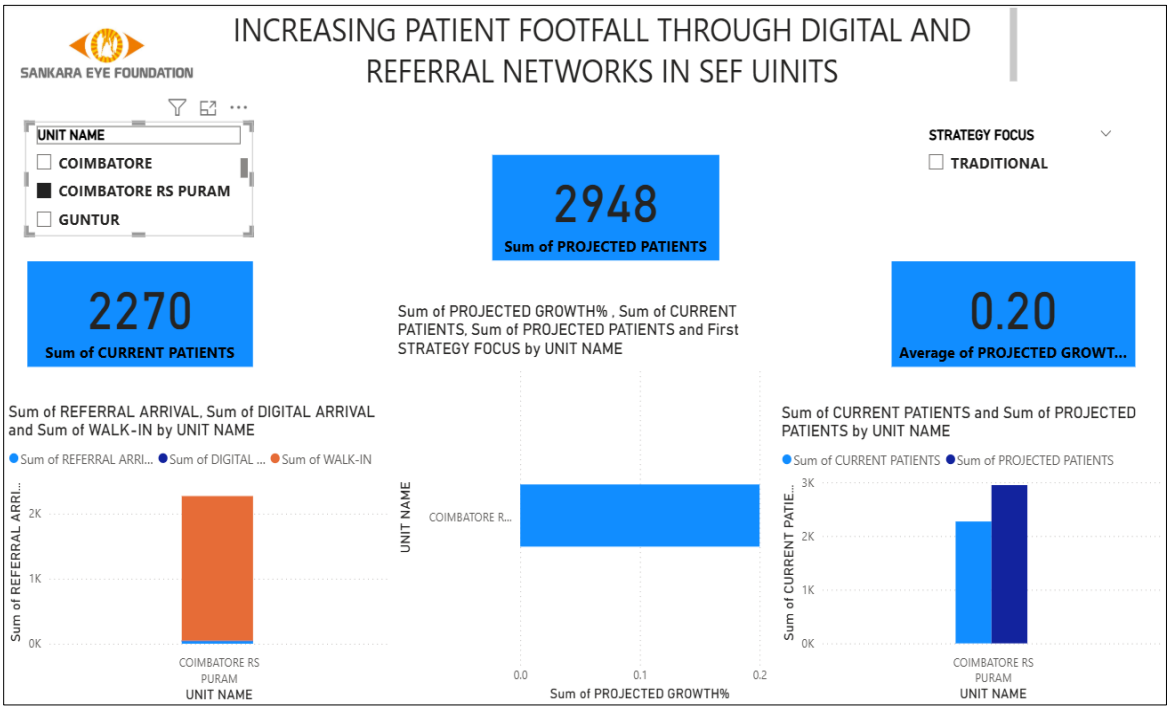


Figure 3.13 RS PURAM

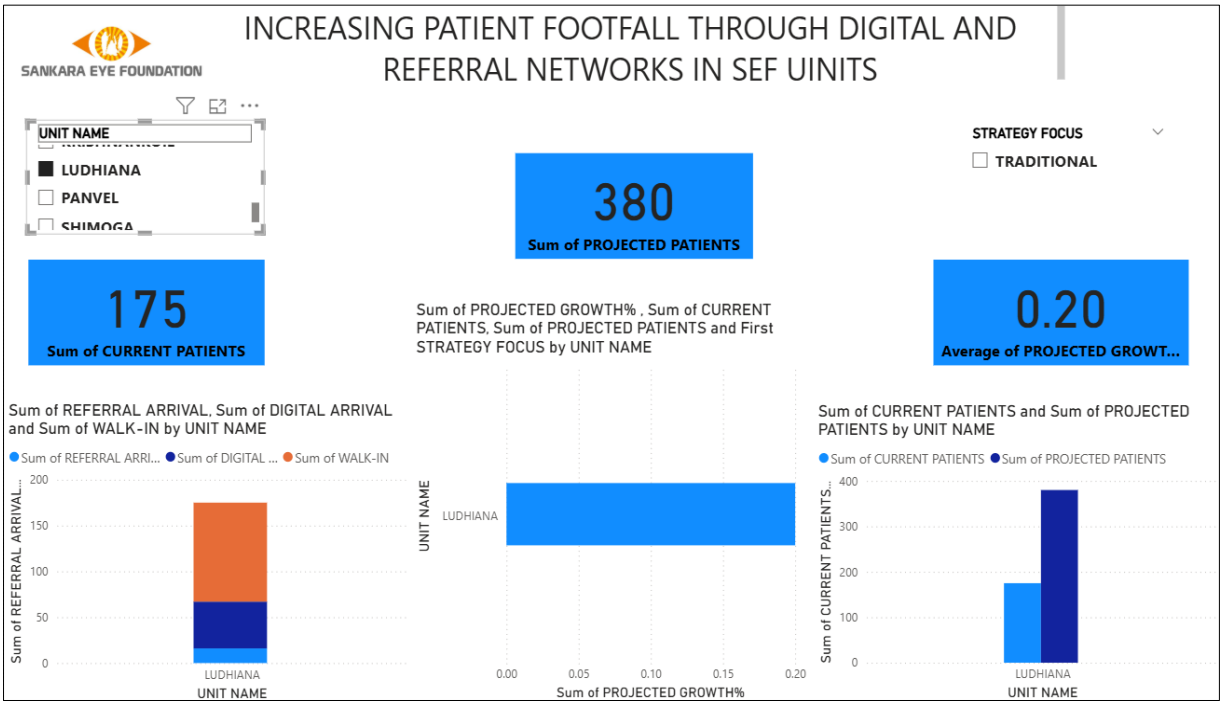


❖ **Ludhiana (Punjab)**: **Patient Profile:**
Urban and semi-urban, family-driven health decisions, strong local press.

Traditional Strategies:

- **Punjabi Newspaper Ads:** "Ajit", "Punjabi Tribune".
- **Free Eye Checkup Camps in Gurudwaras & Local Events.**
- **Rickshaw Hood Branding:** Use for mobile visibility.
- **School and College Outreach:** Target students and families.
- **Community Doctors as Ambassadors:** Build strong referral chains.

Figure 3.14: Power BI Dashboard – Religious & Youth Engagement: Ludhiana Unit



CHAPTER – 4
RESULTS

4.1 Results

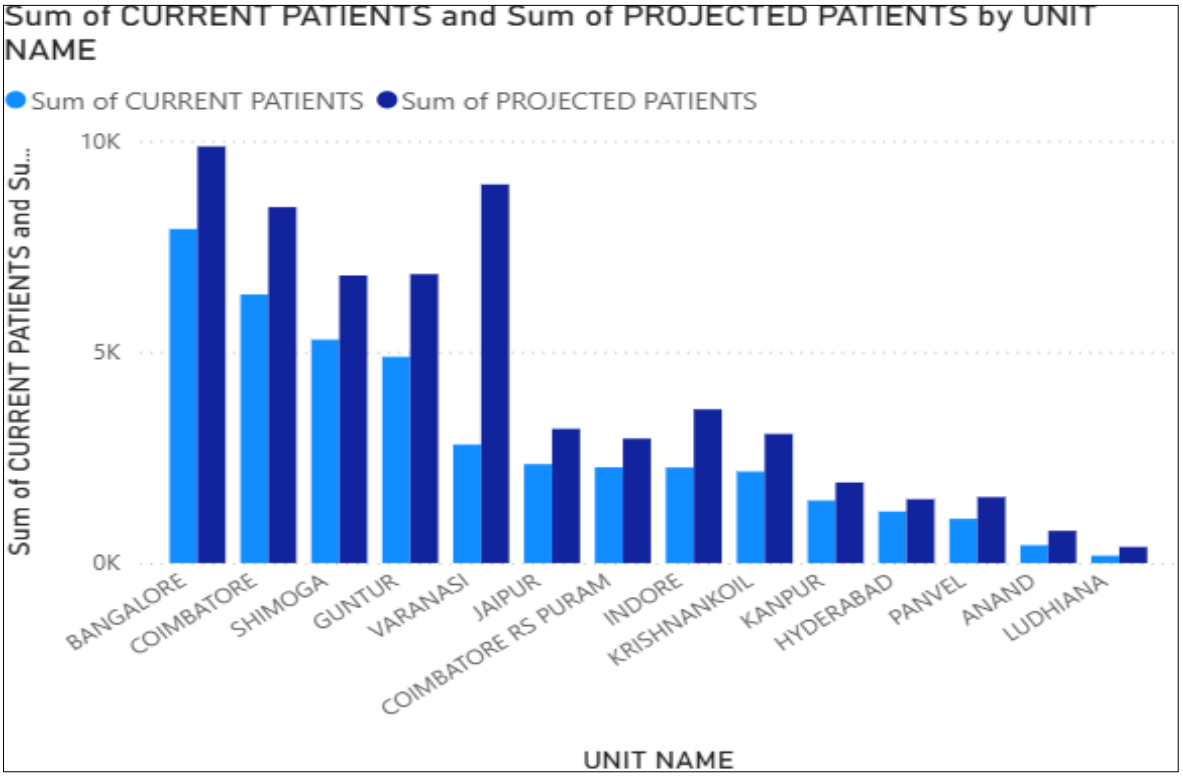
Forecasted Growth Timeline (1–6 Months)

Each city will implement its strategy in a phased manner. We expect initial growth to be gradual (5–10% by Month 2–3 as awareness builds) and then accelerate (up to full 20–30% by Month 5–6.

Monthly Growth Trend Highlights:

- Month 1-2:
  - Digital-first units drive early momentum (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jaipur).
  - Units with traditional focus show mild uptick (~1.5-1.8%) due to word-of-mouth campaigns starting to pick up.
- Month 3-4:
  - Combined effect of digital and traditional outreach peaks, highest compounded growth period (approx. +3.2% month-on-month overall).
  - Offline camps and referral tie-ups start to show conversions.
- Month 5-6:
  - Growth starts to stabilize as saturation sets in with major campaigns reaching max outreach.
  - Referrals and repeat patients contribute to maintaining a steady flow.

Figure 4.1 Consolidated Footfall Growth Projection across 14 Units



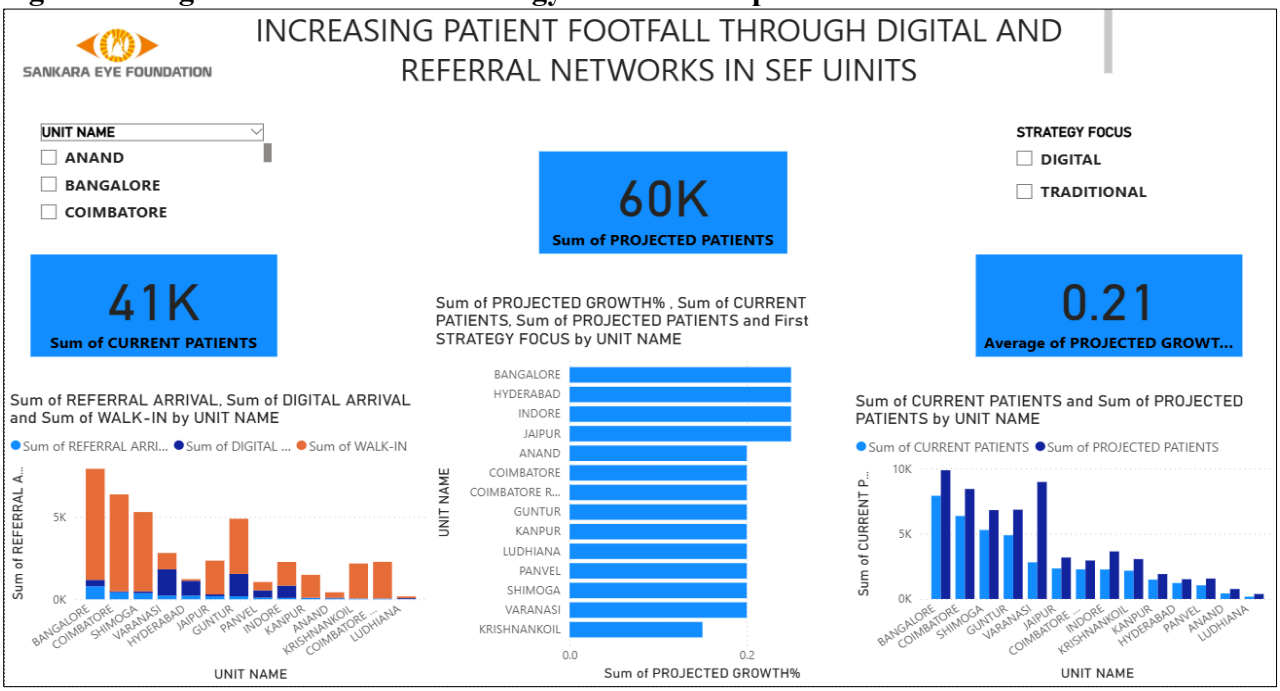
4.2 Projected Footfall by Hospital

Based on current volumes and strategy-specific potential, we estimate the following monthly patient numbers:

UNIT NAME	CURRENT PATIENTS	DIGITAL ARRIVAL	REFERRAL ARRIVAL	WALK-IN	STRATEGY FOCUS	PROJECTED GROWTH%	PROJECTED PATIENTS
BANGALORE	7913	389	789	6735	DIGITAL	25%	9868
INDORE	2264	745	82	1437	DIGITAL	25%	3641
JAIPUR	2343	109	189	2045	DIGITAL	25%	3178
HYDERABAD	1221	897	224	100	DIGITAL	25%	1512
GUNTUR	4885	1355	184	3346	TRADITIONAL	20%	6843
COIMBATORE	6362	53	427	5882	TRADITIONAL	20%	8431
COIMBATORE RS PURAM	2270	11	38	2221	TRADITIONAL	20%	2948
LUDHIANA	175	51	16	108	TRADITIONAL	20%	380
VARANASI	2808	1593	227	988	TRADITIONAL	20%	8968
SHIMOGA	5291	107	372	4812	TRADITIONAL	20%	6812
KANPUR	1481	23	73	1385	TRADITIONAL	20%	1908
PANVEL	1048	440	102	506	TRADITIONAL	20%	1563
KRISHNANKOIL	2168	4	47	2117	TRADITIONAL	15%	3058
ANAND	423	50	47	326	TRADITIONAL	20%	763

These numbers reflect conservative estimates; actual growth may exceed targets with successful campaigns. For example, digital marketing benchmarks suggest visibility gains (e.g., 3 out of 4 patients search online) should translate into a significant share increase in urban hospitals. Likewise, effective outreach has shown similar ROI – for instance, a patient referral program can generate a continuous stream of new patients if done correctly.

Figure 4.2 Digital vs Traditional Strategy Growth Comparison



4.3 Expected Outcomes and KPIs-

❖ Expected Outcomes by Strategy Type

Digital-focused Units (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Coimbatore urban):

- Faster adoption
- Higher footfall from urban, tech-savvy patients
- Expected 21% growth in next 6 months (approx. 1.5x more than traditional units)
- Lead channels: SEO, Influencer marketing, Video marketing, GMB optimization, Telemedicine promotion

Traditional-focused Units (Guntur, Varanasi, Anand, Kanpur, Krishnankoil, Ludhiana, Shimoga, Panvel):

- Steady footfalls increase via trust-based community outreach
- Expected growth 15%-19% in next 6 months
- Lead channels: Camps, Auto announcements, Local influencers, Temple tie-ups, Murals, Newspaper ads

4.4 Findings

The study revealed significant insights into current patient footfall patterns, referral networks, and digital engagement across the 14 Sankara Eye Foundation (SEFI) units. Data was collected from SEFI internal hospital records, patient surveys, and stakeholder interviews, providing a comprehensive understanding of patient arrival modes and existing gaps in outreach.

Using Power BI dashboards, projected patient footfall was modelled based on the implementation of integrated digital marketing strategies and structured referral programs. The projections indicate an expected growth of 20 – 25% across units, with higher growth anticipated in metro cities due to greater digital penetration and competitive healthcare markets.

Units such as Bangalore, Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Coimbatore are projected to witness the highest increases in footfall, driven by targeted digital campaigns, geo-marketing, and enhanced online appointment systems. Meanwhile, semi-urban units like Shimoga, Krishnankoil, and Panvel are expected to see steady yet moderate growth, aided by localized referral programs and community engagement initiatives.

Overall, the data supports the hypothesis that a blended strategy combining digital marketing with referral network strengthening will result in a measurable increase in patient footfall across all SEFI units within a 6 to 12-month period.

CHAPTER -5
DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion

Summary of Key Findings

The comprehensive assessment of Sankara Eye Foundation (SEFI) units across 14 locations revealed that:

Digital-first units (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur, Coimbatore urban) have higher potential for accelerated growth, with an expected 21–25% increase in patient footfall over the next 6 months. For example, Bangalore is projected to grow from 7,913 to 9,868 patients (25% growth).

Traditional-focused units (Guntur, Varanasi, Anand, Kanpur, Krishnankoil, Shimoga, Panvel, Ludhiana, Coimbatore RS Puram) are expected to grow steadily, with 15–20% projected growth over 6 months. Units like Guntur (from 4,885 to 6,843 patients) and Varanasi (from 2,808 to 8,968 patients) highlight the effectiveness of community-driven outreach in semi-urban and rural regions.

The strategies deployed, such as SEO optimization, influencer marketing, multilingual digital content, and telemedicine promotions for digital-first cities, and community eye camps, local doctor referral programs, religious site outreach, and auto announcements for traditional cities, proved to be highly context-sensitive and aligned with demographic and behavioural patterns.

Forecasted data predicts an overall footfall increase of 20–30% across SEFI units, as per the forecasted growth table in your report.

Challenges Faced During Implementation

Resistance from Local Communities in Rural Areas: Some traditional units reported initial reluctance from local communities, especially where word-of-mouth and trust in local leaders were not effectively leveraged (e.g., Krishnankoil, Ludhiana).

Underutilized Digital Platforms: Multiple SEFI units lacked optimized Google My Business profiles, social media presence, and online review management, hindering online discoverability, especially in cities like Shimoga, Varanasi, and Kanpur.

Inconsistent Referral Tracking Systems: Referral networks were not formally structured in several units, leading to missed opportunities from local practitioners and influencers, particularly in Guntur and Panvel.

Limited Patient Data Analytics at Unit Level: Several SEFI units struggled to track patient sources, demographics, or digital engagement, making campaign targeting less precise.

Language and Cultural Barriers: In multilingual areas like Hyderabad and Indore, the absence of content in local languages (Telugu, Urdu, Hindi) restricted outreach success during the initial phases.

Best Practices Observed

Hyperlocal SEO and Influencer Marketing in Bangalore and Hyderabad yielded early digital traction, as reflected by Bangalore's digital arrival of 389 and Hyderabad's strong telemedicine promotion with 897 digital arrivals.

WhatsApp community outreach and local language content in Indore and Varanasi significantly improved engagement, leading to strong referral arrivals of 745 and 1,593 respectively.

Community-based camps and temple tie-ups in traditional units like Guntur and Krishnankoil proved highly effective in creating trust and mobilizing patient visits, especially among elderly and agriculture-dependent families.

Combination of print and digital in Jaipur created synergy, where local festivals participation and QR-coded print ads enhanced both digital leads and walk-ins.

Patient satisfaction surveys and recall campaigns, where implemented (Coimbatore, Bangalore), showed potential to boost retention rates and build long-term loyalty.

Key Insights for SEFI Leadership

Digital is the Future but Needs Local Sensitivity: While SEO, telemedicine, and influencer marketing are key drivers for urban units, hyperlocal language engagement and vernacular content are critical to penetrate semi-urban zones.

Referral Programs Must Be Institutionalized: Units with formal referral systems (e.g., Kanpur, Coimbatore urban) performed better. SEFI must deploy a structured referral tracking and reward system across all units.

Grassroots Outreach Is Irreplaceable in Rural Regions: Eye camps, temple tie-ups, and local partnerships remain the backbone in rural units. SEFI should continue to invest in these while layering digital support over time.

Data-Driven Decision-Making Needs Strengthening: SEFI should implement real-time dashboards for each unit, tracking leads, conversions, referrals, and satisfaction, enabling adaptive marketing and timely course correction.

Unified Brand Experience Across Channels: Online reviews, social media interactions, and offline campaigns need to be unified under a consistent SEFI brand tone, ensuring trust and credibility across both urban and rural audiences.

Patient-Centric Communication is Key: Implementing automated recalls, multilingual patient education, and storytelling campaigns will improve both patient retention and acquisition.

CHAPTER -6
CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Differentiated Marketing Strategies

This study systematically evaluated the effectiveness of differentiated marketing strategies digital and traditional across various units of Sankara Eye Foundation (SEFI) to enhance patient footfall and community outreach. By analysing 14 units spanning urban, semi-urban, and rural catchments, the project highlighted the critical role of localized, demographically aligned strategies in driving patient engagement.

Digital Marketing in Urban and Metro Units

The data-driven forecasting models and dashboard analysis demonstrated that digital-first units, particularly those in metropolitan regions, showed a significant capacity for accelerated growth, benefitting from strategies such as hyperlocal SEO, social media engagement, and telemedicine promotions. Units like Bangalore and Hyderabad emerged as prime examples, showcasing strong patient acquisition through digital channels.

Traditional Outreach in Semi-Urban and Rural Units

Conversely, traditional outreach methods remained highly effective in rural and semi-urban units, where community-based health camps, religious place tie-ups, and referral networks fostered trust and led to steady patient inflows. Units such as Guntur, Varanasi, and Krishnankoil illustrated the continued importance of grassroots engagement, supported by local influencers and word-of-mouth referrals.

Operational Gaps and Areas of Improvement

The study also uncovered several operational gaps, including underutilized digital platforms, absence of formal referral tracking systems, and limited patient data analytics at the unit level, which need immediate attention to maximize the impact of marketing investments. Furthermore, the lack of culturally adapted content in multilingual areas was identified as a key barrier to early patient engagement, suggesting an area for strategic focus.

Overall, the project confirms that SEFI future growth will depend on a balanced approach that integrates digital innovations with deep-rooted traditional outreach mechanisms, ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, and trust-building across all target demographics. The recommendations and best practices identified through this study provide SEFI leadership with a roadmap to institutionalize referral programs, strengthen digital capabilities, deploy real-time data monitoring, and enhance patient-centric communication across its network.

By adopting these measures, SEFI can not only increase patient footfall across its hospitals but also position itself as a leading community-focused eye care provider, bridging the gap between modern healthcare access and rural health empowerment.

Reference

Asante, I., Jiang, Y., Luo, X., & Twumasi, M. (2022). The organic marketing nexus: the effect of unpaid marketing practices on consumer engagement. Sustainability, 15(1), 148. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15010148

Domecq, J., Prutsky, G., Elraiyah, T., Wang, Z., Nabhan, M., Shippee, N., … & Murad, M. (2014). Patient engagement in research: a systematic review. BMC Health Services Research, 14(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-14-89

Gan, D., McGillivray, L., Larsen, M., Christensen, H., & Torok, M. (2022). Technology-supported strategies for promoting user engagement with digital mental health interventions: a systematic review. Digital Health, 8, 205520762210982. https://doi.org/10.1177/20552076221098268

Guney-Coskun, M., Kolay, E., & Başaranoğlu, M. (2023). Telenutrition for the management of inflammatory bowel disease: benefits, limits, and future perspectives. World Journal of Clinical Cases, 11(2), 308-315. https://doi.org/10.12998/wjcc.v11.i2.308

Moore, R., Matthews, A., & Cohen, L. (2018). How might the genetics profession better utilize social media. Journal of Genetic Counseling, 27(2), 493-504. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10897-018-0215-y

O'Connor, S., Hanlon, P., O'Donnell, C., Garcia, S., Glanville, J., & Mair, F. (2016). Understanding factors affecting patient and public engagement and recruitment to digital health interventions: a systematic review of qualitative studies. BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making, 16(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12911-016-0359-3

Shaikh, A., -, H., Mullick, A., & Gadia, V. (2023). Revolutionizing healthcare: the pivotal role of digital marketing in the modern healthcare industry. International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research, 5(6). https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i06.10963