

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



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ABSTARCT

- Digital-first units (e.g., Bangalore, Hyderabad ,Jaipur , Indore) 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
- 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.

STUDY OBJECTIVES

Footfall Increase

Raise monthly patient visits by 20–30% within six months.

Digital Presence Enhancement

Focus on improving visibility in digital-first units like Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, and Jaipur.

Traditional Unit Outreach

Strengthen community outreach via camps, media, and doctor referrals in 10 traditional units.

Patient Retention

Utilize newsletters, recall systems, and surveys to improve retention rates.

Performance Monitoring

Track KPIs such as website traffic, conversion rates, and patient satisfaction.

Projections

Provide monthly unit-wise footfall and growth forecasts.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Current challenges at SEFI units

- Several units underperform due to an underutilized digital and traditional footprint, inconsistent patient follow-up, and low brand visibility in key communities.
- 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.
- Moreover, the absence of structured referral networks limits patient inflow. Notably, 74% of patients rely on online reviews when choosing healthcare providers limiting their online discoverability and new patient acquisition potential.



METHODOLOGY



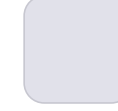
Comprehensive Digital Audit

Evaluated SEO, websites, Google My Business profiles, and social media presence across units.



Hospital Data Analysis

Segmented patient walk-ins, referral sources, and digital lead conversions to understand patterns.



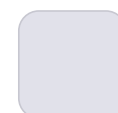
Stakeholder Interviews

Gathered insights from administrative staff, marketers, and referral partners.



Pilot Campaigns

Execute a low-cost digital marketing experiments in selected units to test effectiveness.



Dashboarding

Implemented Power BI visualization tools for ongoing performance monitoring and projections.



UNIT WISE 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.



HYDERABAD

- **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.



INDORE

- **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.



JAIPUR

- **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



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.



VARANASI

- **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.



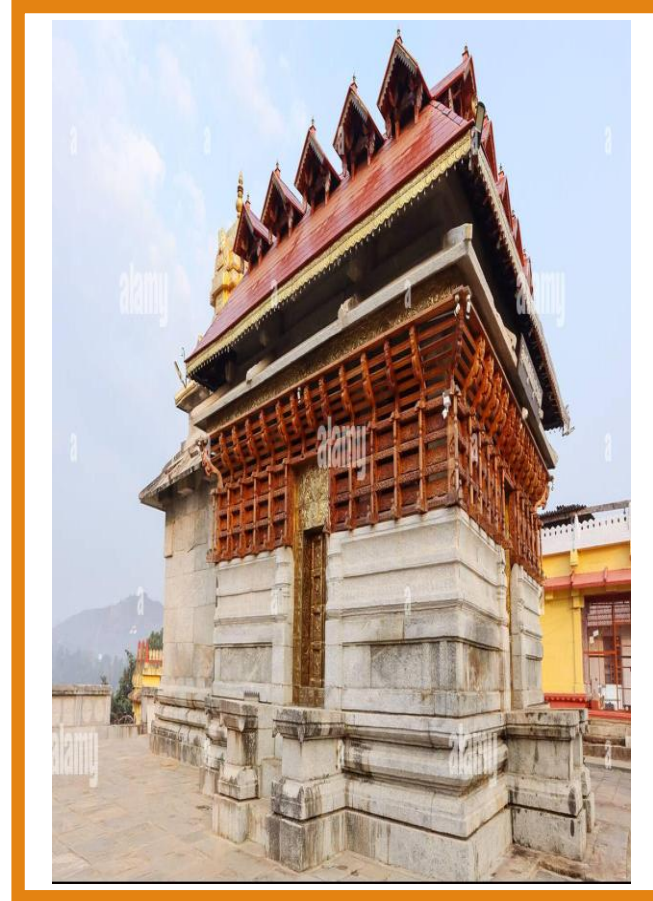
ANAND & KANPUR

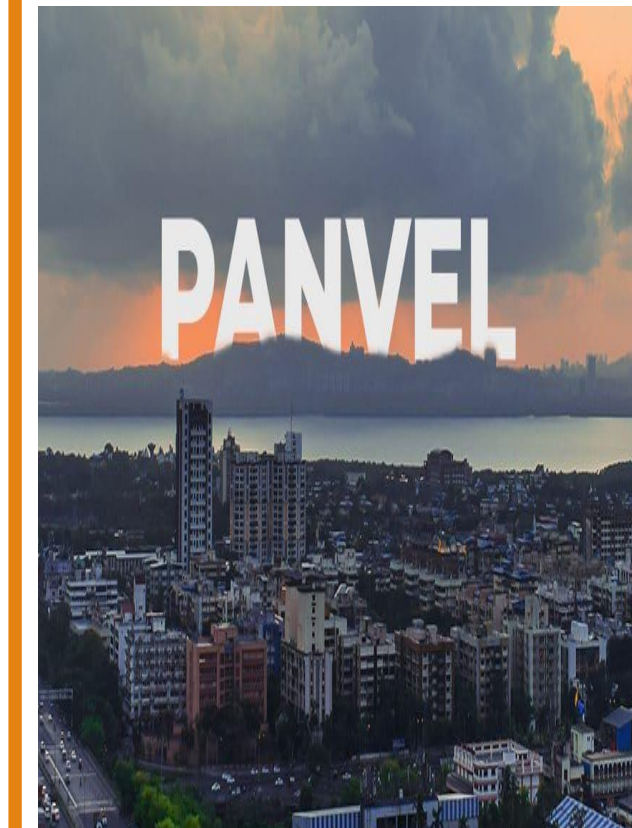
- **Anand (Gujarat):**
 - **Patient Profile:** Semi-urban and rural mix, strong community networks, Gujarati-speaking population.
 - **Traditional Strategies:**
 - **Eye Camps in Villages:** Target Anand's surrounding talukas.
 - **Community Leader Engagement:** Work with panchayat heads and temple trustees.
 - **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.
- **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.



KRISHNANKOIL & SHIMOGA

- **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.
- **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**





PANVEL & COIMBATORE UNITS

- **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.**
- **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.**



LUDHIANA

- **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.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

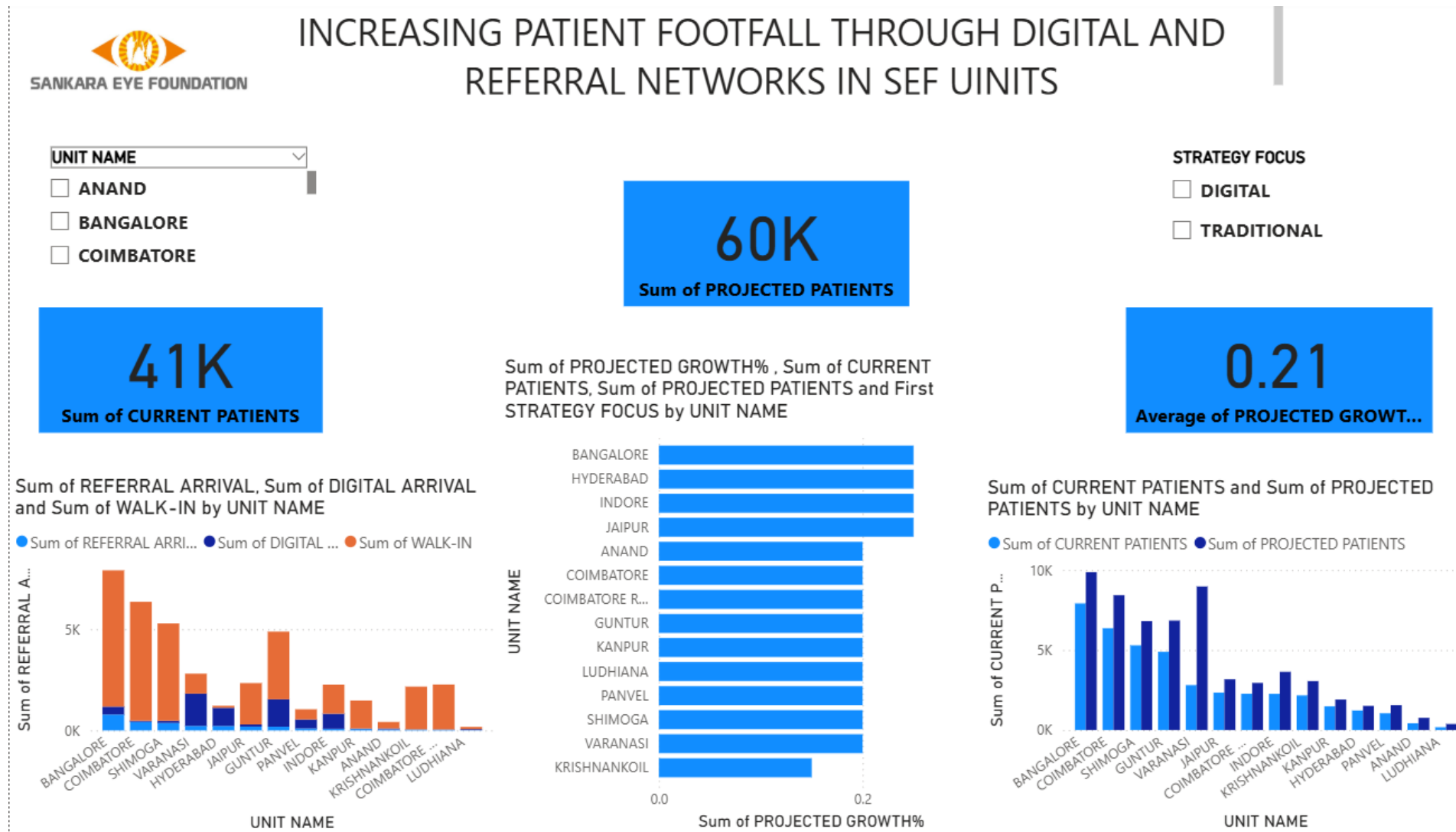
- **Expected Outcomes by Strategy Type**
- **Digital-focused Units** (Bangalore, Hyderabad, Indore, Jaipur,):
 - Faster adoption
 - Higher footfall from urban, tech-savvy patients
 - Expected 21% growth in next 6 months (approx. 1.5x more than traditional units)
 - Lead channels: SEO, Influencer marketing, Video marketing, GMB optimization, Telemedicine promotion
- **Traditional-focused Units** (Guntur, Varanasi, Anand, Kanpur, Krishnankoil, Ludhiana, Shimoga, Panvel , Coimbatore units):
 - 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

FORECASTED GROWTH OVERVIEW

Unit Name	Current Patients	Digital Arrival	Referral Arrival	Walk-in	Strategy Focus	Projected Growth %	Projected Patients
Bangalore	7,913	389	789	6,735	Digital	25%	9,868
Indore	2,264	745	82	1,437	Digital	25%	3,641
Jaipur	2,343	109	189	2,045	Digital	25%	3,178
Hyderabad	1,221	897	224	100	Digital	25%	1,512
Guntur	4,885	1,355	184	3,346	Traditional	20%	6,843
Coimbatore	6,362	53	427	5,882	Traditional	20%	8,431
Coimbatore RS Puram	2,270	11	38	2,221	Traditional	20%	2,948
Ludhiana	175	51	16	108	Traditional	20%	380
Varanasi	2,808	1,593	227	988	Traditional	20%	8,968
Shimoga	5,291	107	372	4,812	Traditional	20%	6,812
Kanpur	1,481	23	73	1,385	Traditional	20%	1,908
Panvel	1,048	440	102	506	Traditional	20%	1,563
Krishnankoil	2,168	4	47	2,117	Traditional	15%	3,058
Anand	423	50	47	326	Traditional	20%	763

CURRENT PATIENTS = DIGITAL , WALK IN , REFERRAL ARRIVALS

FORECASTED GROWTH TIMELINE



CHALLENGES



Local Resistance

Units in rural areas like Krishnankoil and Ludhiana struggled with reluctance in participating in camps or digital engagement.



Digital Tool Underutilization

Many units had unoptimized Google profiles, inactive social media, and lacked review management systems.



Weak Referral Tracking

No structured systems were present in units like Guntur and Panvel to accurately track or incentivize practitioner referrals.



Data Analytics Deficiency

Units failed to segment patients or analyze digital campaign effectiveness due to lack of analytic tools.



Language Barriers

Limited multilingual content in Hyderabad and Indore restricted early campaign reach and engagement.

BEST PRACTICES IDENTIFIED

Hyperlocal SEO	Multilingual Campaigns	WhatsApp Outreach	Community Tie-ups
Bangalore experienced early growth by optimizing Google My Business profiles and using local keywords to target their audience.	Hyderabad’s inclusion of Telugu and Urdu content significantly expand accessibility and patient engagement.	Indore effectively harnessed local WhatsApp groups, driving higher referral traffic and community engagement.	Varanasi’s collaboration with temples and Ayurveda practitioners for screening camps will enhanced trust and conversion rates.
Print–Digital Synergy			
Jaipur bridged offline and online by embedding QR codes in festival posters linking directly to appointment booking pages.			

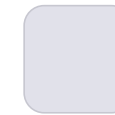
KEY INSIGHTS FOR SEF LEADERSHIP



Digital marketing success depends heavily on integrating local cultural and language sensitivities into content and campaigns for greater relevance.



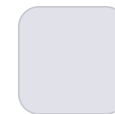
Structured referral systems are crucial for growing patient footfall in traditional units and sustaining consistent inflow.



Community outreach in rural and semi-urban areas remains essential, leveraging local influencers such as temples, community leaders, and doctors.



Investment in unit-specific dashboards paired with automated retention tools will enable data-driven marketing and operational decisions.



Consistent branding and patient experience both online and offline are needed to amplify trust, recall, and long-term patient loyalty.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

-  **Referral Systems:** Implement formal referral tracking and reward programs across all SEF units to incentivize practitioner participation and patient sharing.
-  **Localized Digital Strategies:** Tailor digital marketing efforts to language and cultural contexts specific to each unit's geographic area to enhance engagement.
-  **Dashboard Integration:** Deploy real-time digital marketing dashboards at the unit level for precise monitoring and agile decision-making.
-  **Standardized Branding:** Ensure uniform online and offline branding and patient experience to strengthen recognition and trust.
-  **Automated Retention Campaigns:** Roll out newsletters, recall reminders, and testimonial campaigns to maintain ongoing patient relationships and loyalty.

The study confirms that combining digital tools with grassroots community engagement forms the most effective blended marketing model. Urban units thrive on SEO, social influence, and telemedicine, while rural units leverage community trust and referral networks. To maintain growth, SEF must institutionalize referral structures, expand digital capabilities, and customize patient communication at scale for sustained success.

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.