Evaluating the Effectiveness of Digital Content Delivery and usability of The Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) Institute

ABSTRACT

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| **Aims:** The primary aim of this study was to assess the usability, accessibility, and content relevance of the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) website for three main user groups: the general public, researchers, and heritage professionals. The study sought to identify strengths and weaknesses in terms of user experience, navigation, and accessibility, as well as to provide recommendations for improvements.**Study design:** This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining content analysis with webometric analysis. A systematic framework was followed to evaluate the website’s technical performance alongside its content relevance and usability for different user groups. The combination of these two methods allowed for a comprehensive evaluation, integrating both qualitative content insights and quantitative technical data.**Place and Duration of Study:** The study focused on the KCHR website, with data collected on February 15, 2025. The analysis was performed remotely, using web tools and methodologies for website assessment. The study period for data analysis and reporting extended over several weeks following data collection**Methodology:** The analysis was conducted remotely using the SiteAnalyzer Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Tool v2.2.119, which is a webometric tool designed to assess website performance and optimization. While webometric analysis (Webometric analysis examines the structure, content, and performance of websites to assess their accessibility and user engagement. It helps identify technical issues that impact user experience and website effectiveness.) was not the core focus of the study, it provided essential data on technical aspects such as accessibility, navigation efficiency, and search functionality. These insights helped complement the content analysis, which focused on user engagement and accessibility. By utilizing webometric data, the study was able to highlight key areas for improvement, including interactivity and user experience, offering a more holistic evaluation of the Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) website. A 1–5 rating scale was used to assess usability criteria determined by the study’s objectives. **Results:** The analytical findings highlight both strengths and weaknesses of the KCHR web portal. The site is open and well laid out, providing a clear connection to Kerala’s history and cultural experience. It effectively offers insights into research activities, public programs, and cultural initiatives. There are areas that need improvement, particularly in navigation and search functionality. While basic navigation is straightforward, some users may struggle to locate specific resources due to poor search functionality and less intuitive pathways to key areas such as research opportunities. Enhancing these aspects, along with user engagement features, can significantly improve accessibility and information retrieval for both researchers and the public. Specific recommendations include increasing interactivity and providing clearer guidance on research resources. The integration of Kerala’s historical heritage into the website creates an effective platform for showcasing the state's rich culture while also promoting research and public engagement.**Conclusion:** The study concludes that the KCHR website effectively presents Kerala’s cultural diversity and historical heritage, serving as a valuable resource for both the public and researchers. There are key areas that need improvement to enhance usability. Enhancing search functionality, navigation, and overall user experience is essential to better serve its diverse audience. Key recommendations include improving search functionality, streamlining navigation, and increasing interactivity. Improved pathways for discovering research opportunities and increased interactivity would strengthen the website’s role in supporting research and public engagement. While the website is well-built, optimizing these areas will ensure it caters more effectively to the needs of its users. |

*Keywords: Content Analysis, Web analysis, Historical Knowledge Dissemination, KCHR, Kerala Council for Heritage and Research*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Kerala Council for Historical Research (KCHR) serves as a leading research institute in the field of Kerala’s cultural heritage, history, archaeology, and social sciences It is a research institute autonomous by virtue of being recognized by the University of Kerala and supported by the Government of Kerala, has been active in promoting historical scholarship. The main activities are interdisciplinary research, publication of research, organization of conferences, grants and scholarships, and fellowship training programs. One widely used outlet for research institutes to publish knowledge efficiently in this digital world. It serves as a vital portal for KCHR to communicate its research projects, publications, events and educational materials. These resources available online, allow both scholars and the general public at large to engage with Kerala’s rich historical and cultural heritage of KCHR. , The present study avails the initiatives of KCHR in digital information and knowledge dissemination through its website. The study employs content analysis to gauge the extent and nature of historical data, current research, published findings, educational resources, collaborative partnerships, financial assistance programs, publications, archives and library information are available online.   The research evaluates website accessibility, usability, and utility for the dissemination of historical knowledge. Through this analysis, the study aims to investigate the role of the website in preservation and dissemination of the history of Kerala in the digital world by checking its correlation with the information seekers such as researcher’s students and the general public.

 The focus of this research is on the degree to which the KCHR website helps to disseminate digital information and knowledge, as well as on the structure and functionality of the website. It examines evaluates if the material is properly organized, easily accessible, and of relevance to both academic researchers and the public at large. This study evaluates the utility of the website as a platform for sharing historical knowledge and facilitating engagement with Kerala’s cultural heritage.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Panwar et al. (2025) found that Web 2.0 technology was used on a large number of the Indian Agricultural Universities' websites, but the adoption rate ranged from low to high. Higher education institutions with a focus on agriculture were slower to adopt new features, while deemed to be universities led in webmail and Web OPAC. Pradhan (2025) looked at academic library websites in Maharashtra, using content analysis to evaluate their truthfulness and usefulness in providing information to users. Dobriyal and Deepmala (2024) examined the web visibility of NAAC Sanskrit universities in India, claiming that improvement is needed before candully internationalizing one's presence on domestic thermalese platforms in a world where global receive frequencies are no longer the same. Sampath Kumar and Dhanaraj (2024) Used the Wayback Machine to track Southern India universities' web sites+Extension on the traditional Maniyyantharam far-sighted businesses, people must do manual backup of sites., in order for Vapor decay causing data loss happen. Sharib et al. (2024) This is an evaluative study conducted on the University of Luck now library web site. It was found to be effective, but suggested more orderly features are needed along with a significantly different appearance. Sharib et al. (2024) Another study by this group is an analysis of Annamalai University library web site, identifying that there is lack of things such interactive features. (like news and feedback options for the users ) Needed is for better user engagement. Putra (2024) The SITU TAK website at Telkom University was assessed by Miss Lestari, revealing that there is a gap between what users expect and the quality of the website patted them on the back for. There are areas to be improved. Liu and Arnet (2023) examines the factors that contribute to the success of website usability focus on various aspects like navigation, design, content relevance, and user engagement, emphasizing their critical roles in shaping user satisfaction. The study also presents empirical data to support the impact of these factors on user behavior and website performance. The findings suggest that optimizing these factors leads to more effective and user-friendly websites. Nielsen (2022) provides a comprehensive framework for designing user-friendly systems, emphasizing the importance of usability in website and software interface design. The book emphasizes user-centered design, usability testing, and effective navigation, providing practical methods for enhancing user experience. Nielsen's work focuses on key usability principles such as minimizing user errors and improving accessibility, making it a crucial reference in human-computer interaction research. Sadaf et al. (2021) Globally, a worldwide content analysis of the top 50 medical university websites revealed serious problems such as lacking library services and accessibility to resources. Muniyasamy et al. (2024) The research, which conducted a webometric study of the Web site of 13 Law colleges in Tamil Nadu, reveals that There scenic spots for these institutions to improve their site quality through various measures including services.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

* Assessing Digital Resources, Content Accessibility, and Organization of Research Outputs on the KCHR Website
* Examining the User-Friendliness, Navigation, and Structure of Key Website Sections
* Investigating Multimedia, Interactive Tools, and Research Support Availability and Functionality
* Evaluating the Transparency, Authority, Timeliness, and Relevance of Research Information
* Analyzing the Functionality of Research Support Tools and Their Accessibility

4. methodology

The methodological approach for this study involves a combination of webometric data collection and content analysis of the KCHR website to assess the general information available to both the public and researchers. The data is current as of 10 October 2023, and the site was audited on 15 February 2025. Webometric data was collected using the SiteAnalyzer Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Tool v2.2.119, which provided insights into the website’s accessibility, structure, and performance. Webometric analysis focused on gathering technical and quantitative data, such as page loading speed, link structure, and overall functionality, to evaluate the website's technical performance, usability, optimization, and SEO. While webometric analysis was not the primary focus of the study, it was incorporated to establish a technical foundation for understanding the website's usability and functionality. The analysis identified areas of improvement, helping to guide the content analysis by highlighting sections that could impact user experience and accessibility. In contrast, content analysis evaluated the quality, relevance, and user experience of the website’s content, including text, images, and other materials. This analysis assessed how effectively the content meets user needs, the clarity of the information, and its ability to engage the audience. A systematic content analysis was conducted by reviewing different sections of the site and scoring them on a 1-5 rating scale, where 1 indicated poor performance, 3 average, and 5 excellent. This approach ensured a thorough evaluation of the website’s content quality and user experience, assessing its overall effectiveness in communicating and serving its intended purpose.

**5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**5.1 Website Analysis of KCHR:**

The website’s navigation menu should include key sections like "Home," "About Us," "Research," "Publications," "Events," and "Contact," with logical sub-menus under each category to enhance user experience. For example, "Research" could have sub-menus like "Ongoing Projects" and "Publications," making it easier for users to find detailed information. Technically, the website has 157 internal links and 43 external links, with a page size of 105.5 KB and a fast loading time of 0.6 seconds. It is available for indexing in robots.txt, meta robots, and X-Robots-Tag, ensuring proper crawling by search engines. However, the absence of a robots.txt file, canonical tag, and HTTPS redirection may impact indexing and SEO. The domain is 10 years old, with an expiration date in 2029, and its IP address is in India.

**Suggestion**

• Add missing description and H1 tag for better SEO

• Optimize image ALT texts for accessibility and SEO

• Address missing canonical tags and HTTPS redirection

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 **Fig. 1. Screen short of the Website of KCHR**

**5.2 Categorization of Users:**

This study identified three main user groups: the general public, researchers, and heritage professionals. For the general public, the website provides essential information on Kerala's history and cultural heritage, but lacks user-friendly navigation and engagement features, making it harder for non-expert users to explore. Researchers benefit from the historical content but may find limited access to research resources and inefficient search functionality. For heritage professionals, the website effectively showcases heritage but falls short on interactivity and clear guidance for research opportunities.

Key recommendations for improvement include:

* Enhancing navigation and search functionality to improve information accessibility.
* Increasing interactivity to engage diverse user groups more effectively.
* Providing clearer guidance for researchers on how to explore opportunities.
* Incorporating user feedback studies to continuously assess and improve user experience.

**5.3 Categorization of Information:**

 The KCHR website is well-organized (Table 1), offering clear sections such as General Information, Research Opportunities, Digital Resources & User Engagement, Knowledge Dissemination, Collaborations, Institutional Policies, Engagement & Media, and Recruitment. It provides essential details about the institution, research opportunities, and resources like the Research Library and Publications, supporting both researchers and the public. However, improvements could be made in streamlining navigation and search functionality, making application processes for fellowships more user-friendly, and expanding community engagement through more interactive features. The institutional policies section would benefit from better categorization and downloadable documents. Integrating social media feeds and regular updates to the photo gallery and events section would further enhance user interaction. Overall, while the website is comprehensive, optimizing usability, improving content clarity, and fostering more engagement would make it even more accessible and effective for users.

 The analyzing of the KCHR website focus on evaluating its accessibility, organization, user-friendliness, and content clarity, as well as the effectiveness of research support tools and interactive features. The analysis covers categories such as Research Opportunities, Digital Resources, and Institutional Policies to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Each criterion is rated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating poor performance and 5 indicating excellence. The goal is to assess how well the website serves its users and provide recommendations for enhancing its usability and engagement.

 **Summary of Ratings:** 5: Exceptional performance in that area.,4: Good performance with minor room for improvement.,3: Acceptable performance but needs attention in some areas. 2: Below average; significant improvement needed and 1: Very poor performance requires immediate attention.

 Table 1 Categorization of Information Available on the KCHR Website

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Available Information** |
| General Information | Home, About KCHR, Contact, Language Section, General Link, Social Link |
| Research Opportunities | Research Projects, Fellowships 2023-24, Internships, Courses, Financial Assistance for Research Fund |
| Digital Resources & User Engagement | Research Library and Resource Centre, KCHR Publications, KCHR Newsletter, Archives, Video Archives, Online Repository on History, Online Engagement via Events, Feedback Systems |
| Knowledge Dissemination | KCHR Newsletter, Events & Programs, Community Participation in Research, |
| Collaborations & Institutional Links | Collaborative Institutions, Institutional Partnerships |
| Institutional Policies | KCHR Rules & Circulars, Poilcy |
| Engagement & Media  | Photo Gallery, Web Archives (KCHR Archives),Twitter and Facebook |
| Recruitment | Job Opportunities, Staff Recruitment, Career Development within KCHR |

**5.4 Accessibility and User-Friendliness of Key Information:**

Accessibility and User-Friendliness of Key Information analysis (table2), the website has a good level of user-friendliness overall, with an impressive Intuitive Call to Action (rated 5), meaning that the primary actions such as fellowship applications and event registrations are clearly visible and easy to access. However, Navigation Ease scored 3, suggesting that while it is somewhat clear, there are areas for improvement, especially in simplifying the menu for easier navigation. The Search Functionality scored 4, indicating that while it works well, there’s room for improvement, particularly in providing more precise search results for niche topics. Mobile Compatibility received a 4, which shows the website performs decently on mobile, but some pages still need optimization for mobile users. Link Accessibility and Download Options both scored 4, highlighting that most links work well, but occasional external links need checking, and download buttons are functional but could benefit from enhanced clarity (such as adding tooltips or labels).

 Table 2: Analyzing Accessibility and User-Friendliness of Key Information

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** |  **Comments/Observations** |
| Navigation Ease | 3 | Navigation is somewhat clear but needs improvement in menu streamlining. |
| Search Functionality | 4 | Works well but could offer more precise results for niche topics. |
| Mobile Compatibility | 4 | Good performance, though some pages need better optimization for mobile. |
| Intuitive Call to Action | 5 | Well-placed, easily identifiable buttons on both desktop and mobile. |
| Link Accessibility | 4 | Most links work, but occasional external link issues require checking. |
| Download Options | 4 | Visible and functional; tooltips or labels could enhance clarity. |

**Suggestions:**

* Streamline the menu structure to improve navigation.
* Refine the search functionality to better target specific research topics.
* Optimize the website further for mobile users, ensuring full responsiveness across devices.
* Improve download clarity by adding helpful labels or tooltips.

**5.5 Organization and Structure of Website Content**

 Table 3: Evaluating the Organization and Structure of Website Content

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** | **Comments/Observations** |
| Navigation Ease | 3 | Navigation is somewhat clear but needs improvement in menu streamlining. |
| Search Functionality | 4 | Works well but could offer more precise results for niche topics. |
| Mobile Compatibility | 4 | Good performance, though some pages need better optimization for mobile. |
| Intuitive Call to Action | 5 | Well-placed, easily identifiable buttons on both desktop and mobile. |
| Link Accessibility | 4 | Most links work, but occasional external link issues require checking. |
| Download Options | 4 | Visible and functional; tooltips or labels could enhance clarity. |

Table 3 provide the Evaluating the Organization and Structure of Website Content. The Menu Structure received a rating of 4, indicating that it is logically organized but could benefit from clearer categorizations to avoid user confusion. The Submenu Arrangement scored 3, pointing to the need for better organization and easier navigation between submenus. Grouping of Information scored 4, showing that content is generally grouped well, but some sections require improved categorization for better user experience. Clarity of Layout scored 4, which suggests that while most content is easy to follow, there’s still potential to better organize key information. Information Overlap or Gaps scored 3, indicating some redundancy and missing integration of content, which could lead to a fragmented user experience.

**Suggestions:**

* Streamline the menu structure to improve navigation.
* Refine the search functionality to better target specific research topics.
* Optimize the website further for mobile users, ensuring full responsiveness across devices.
* Improve download clarity by adding helpful labels or tooltips.

**5.6 Content Clarity, Relevance, and Timeliness**

Assessing Content Clarity, Relevance, and Timeliness shows in the Table 4.The website performs well in terms of Content Clarity, with a score of 4, though some technical terms could be simplified for a broader audience. The Relevance to Target Audience scored 5, indicating that the content is highly relevant to researchers, students, and other academic users. The Timeliness of Updates scored 4, indicating that while most content is up-to-date, some sections could benefit from more frequent updates, particularly in publications and research-related events. The Appropriateness of Language scored 4, showing that the language used is mostly appropriate, but simplifying some technical jargon could improve accessibility. Coverage of Relevant Topics scored 5, demonstrating that the website covers a broad range of relevant topics of interest to the academic community.

Table 4: Assessing Content Clarity, Relevance, and Timeliness

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** | **Comments/Observations** |
| Clarity of Information | 4 | Generally clear, but some terms could be simplified for broader audiences. |
| Relevance to Target Audience | 5 | Highly relevant to researchers and students. |
| Timeliness of Updates | 4 | Generally up-to-date, but some sections need more frequent updates. |
| Appropriateness of Language | 4 | Mostly appropriate; could simplify technical language for general access. |
| Coverage of Relevant Topics | 5 | Comprehensive content for the academic community. |

**Suggestions:**

* Simplify complex terms where possible to enhance accessibility for non-experts.
* Increase the frequency of updates, especially in research sections and event listings.
* Ensure the language used remains appropriate and understandable for a wider audience.

**5.7 Availability and Functionality of Research Support Tools**

 Table 5: Evaluating the Availability and Functionality of Research Support Tools

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** | **Comments/Observations** |
| Fellowship Application Tools | 4 | Accessible, but could be more user-friendly with better forms. |
| Event Registration Tools | 5 | Easy to use with excellent user experience. |
| Downloadable Resources | 4 | Available for download, metadata improvements needed. |
| Online Help or FAQ | 3 | Help section lacks detailed guidance; improvements needed. |
| Accessibility of Forms and Tools | 4 | Mostly easy to fill out; could benefit from more intuitive design. |

Table 5 reveals the availability and functionality of research support tools in KCHR website The Fellowship Application Tools scored 4, indicating that they are accessible, though there’s room for improvement in making the forms more user-friendly. The Event Registration Tools scored 5, highlighting that these tools provide an excellent user experience, with easy-to-use features. Downloadable Resources scored 4, indicating that the resources are readily available for download, but metadata improvements are needed for better clarity. The Online Help or FAQ section scored 3, pointing to the need for more detailed guidance to assist users. Accessibility of Forms and Tools scored 4, indicating that the forms are mostly easy to fill out, but could benefit from a more intuitive design.

**Suggestions:**

* Improve fellowship application forms for better accessibility and usability.
* Expand the Help/FAQ section with more detailed support.
* Organize downloadable resources clearly for easier access.

**5.8 Multimedia and Interactive Features**

Multimedia and interactive features analysing in the table 6.The Use of Images and Graphics scored 4, suggesting that while images and graphics are used effectively; they could be better integrated to serve educational purposes. The Interactive Features scored 4, meaning they are useful, but the website could engage users more effectively by adding features such as quizzes or interactive surveys. Video and Audio Content scored 4, indicating that video and audio content is used effectively but could be of higher quality to enhance user engagement. Multimedia Quality received a perfect score of 5, indicating that the multimedia elements (e.g., videos, images) are of high quality and effectively support the website’s content. User Engagement Features scored 4, showing that while there are comment sections, more development could increase user interaction.

 Table 6: Analyzing Multimedia and Interactive Features

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** | **Comments/Observations** |
| Use of Images and Graphics | 4 | Well-used but could be better integrated for educational purposes. |
| Interactive Features | 4 | Useful, but more engaging features like quizzes could be added. |
| Video and Audio Content | 4 | Effective, but higher-quality content could enhance engagement. |
| Multimedia Quality | 5 | High-quality elements that enhance user engagement. |
| User Engagement Features | 4 | Comment sections available, but more development would increase participation. |

**Suggestions:**

* Integrate multimedia content more effectively into educational sections.
* Add more interactive features (e.g., quizzes, discussion forums) to boost user engagement.
* Enhance the quality of video and audio content for improved educational impact.

**5.9 Transparency, Authority, and Governance of Information**

The website performed strongly in Source Credibility (5), with clear credits given to authors and contributors, ensuring that research outputs are trustworthy. The table 7 discussed that the Transparency of Governance scored 4, indicating that while the organizational structure is clearly outlined; additional information about leadership could enhance transparency. Funding Source Disclosure scored a 4, indicating that funding sources are typically disclosed, but a greater level of detail would enhance transparency. Clear Rules & Policies scored 5 meaning rules for fellowships and applications are well-communicated and clear. Citations and References: 5; the site provides comprehensive and unambiguous references for key publications, which boosts the site authority.

 Table 7: Evaluating the Transparency, Authority, and Governance of Information

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Rating (1-5)** | **Comments/Observations** |
| Source Credibility | 5 | Clear author and contributor credits enhance credibility. |
| Transparency of Governance | 4 | Clear, but more details on leadership structure would improve transparency. |
| Disclosure of Funding Sources | 4 | Generally disclosed, but more details would enhance transparency. |
| Clear Rules & Policies | 5 | Well-communicated and easy to understand. |
| Citations and References | 5 | Complete references to key publications add authority. |

**Suggestions:**

* Provide greater detail on leadership structure and governance to boost transparency. ·
* Include the disclosure or statement of potential funding sources in each research projects.
* Keep giving clear and comprehensive citations to back up research claims.

6. LIMITATION

This study has limitations, including subjective evaluation of a site's design, content, and functionality- which may be quite different from those in other people's eyes. The study did not incorporate input from actual users, such as researchers and general visitors who interact with the site regularly. This lack of diverse user feedback limits the scope of the findings, as it does not capture how various user groups experience the site or what specific improvements they might suggest. A broader, user-centered evaluation, incorporating surveys or focus groups, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the site's usability and functionality. The study focuses exclusively on the website's front-end content, neglecting important technical aspects such as site speed, security, and backend functionality, which are critical to user experience. These technical features play a vital role in determining the overall efficiency of the site but were not analyzed in this research. The study does not account for how the website performs in different network environments, browsers, or devices, which can greatly affect user interaction. The study does not fully capture both the website's technical performance and the broader user experience. Future research should consider addressing these limitations by incorporating user feedback studies, examining technical aspects like speed and security, and comparing the website with similar platforms to provide a more comprehensive evaluation.

7. Conclusion

The study states that the KCHR page is a well-managed and valuable resource, containing vital information in connection with Kerala's cultural heritage, history research courses, academic opportunities and so forth. On its home page, the site describes itself and even includes a brief history of the Academy, which can be found at links on this page of text. It is as well clear that the site's cooperation with many academic and cultural organizations will help foster deeper awareness about Kerala. The website also identifies opportunities for research, such as scholarships, internships, financial aid, and so on-so that scholars and students alike may take Kerala's historical narratives as their subject of study. This website is functional rather than perfect in some areas. The search function, for example, has great room for innovation even though it does manage to display results within an acceptable amount of time. Part of feedback from the users suggests simplifying the language and making improvements to a few interactive functions. a couple of improvements to interactive functions offer. Higher frequency updates would further improve users' experiences here. Although the KCHR website is an important platform for showcasing Kerala's cultural and historical knowledge, it would benefit from greater accessibility and adaptability.

disclaimer (artificial intelligence)

The authors affirm that no generative AI technologies, such as Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot) or text-to-image generators, were used during the writing or editing of this manuscript. All content has been independently developed and reviewed by the authors to ensure originality and academic integrity.

**COMPETING INTERESTS DISCLAIMER:**

Authors have declared that they have no known competing financial interests OR non-financial interests OR personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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