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Digitalisation of socio-cultural relevance of coconut

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Abstract

Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*) is the major crop of Kerala. Nearly 15 per cent of Kerala's annual income is derived from the coconut sector. There is a constant presence of coconut in the socio cultural scenario of Kerala – viz; Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), rituals, art forms, food, medicines, cosmetics, handicraft, myths, etc. There is no other crop as coconut which is connected with the culture of the state to such a large extent. This paper is an experience sharing about using social media and music as tools for disseminating data regarding socio cultural expressions of coconut. To materialize this, a Youtube channel was launched exclusively towards the purpose. Tunes were set to the already available lyrics (traditional types) connected with agricultural and socio cultural relevance of coconut and also to the new lyrics composed during the period 2022 to 2025. Accordingly, musical and narrative videos were produced and uploaded to the above said channel on a weekly frequency. This was basically aimed to compile the scattered data on socio-cultural expressions of coconut under a single umbrella and to highlight the contextual relevance of innovative extension through digitalization and music, thereby contributing to more effective storage and dissemination of information.

Keywords: Coconut, *Cocos nucifera*, Kerala, socio-cultural relevance, indigenous technical knowledge

Introduction

In the digital era, where culture and technology increasingly intersect, the preservation and promotion of traditional knowledge have found new momentum through innovative platforms. Kerala, often referred to as “the land of coconuts,” derives its very name from the word *Kera*, meaning coconut tree in Malayalam. The coconut is not merely an agricultural product in Kerala—it is a symbol of life, sustenance, and identity. Deeply embedded in the rituals, cuisine, festivals, and livelihoods of the people, the coconut holds profound socio-cultural relevance that spans generations.

However, as we continue to modernize and globalize, traditional knowledge systems and cultural symbols may get diluted or forgotten. In this context, digitalisation emerges as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and reinvention. This paper explores how the socio-cultural significance of coconut in Kerala is being revitalized and reimagined through the strategic use of social media and music. These digital tools not only serve to document and disseminate cultural practices but also create interactive and emotionally resonant spaces for engagement, especially among the youth.

By analyzing examples of viral content, musical expressions, digital campaigns, and community-driven initiatives, this paper demonstrates how technology can amplify the coconut's cultural narrative. Ultimately, the study highlights how digital platforms are not only

preserving Kerala's coconut heritage but also transforming it into a dynamic cultural asset for future generations.

Methodology

Considering the socio cultural bonding of the people with coconut, Kerala was selected as the location of study. The emphasis of the study was on uncovering insights through lived experiences, oral traditions, artistic expressions, and localized knowledge, thereby capturing the nuanced socio-cultural dimensions that are not easily quantifiable. Given the complexity and depth of traditional knowledge systems and cultural expressions related to the coconut, a qualitative approach through explorative and ethnographic research designs was deemed most appropriate to collect the data to be disseminated digitally.

Selection of respondents

To ensure rich and diverse data, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify suitable respondents who could offer meaningful insights across different contexts. Respondents were drawn from distinct categories, viz; Members of families and clans traditionally associated with coconut-related rituals, practices, and cultural events, Organizers of rituals and socio-cultural events centered around coconut, Artists and performers who engage with cultural expressions involving the coconut, Professionals and subject experts connected with coconut-based traditions and technologies, Local community

members, encompassing both older and younger generations, to gauge awareness and document rituals, Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), proverbs, folklore, etc., Subject matter experts in agriculture and allied sectors with a specific focus on coconut, Extension personnel involved in agricultural outreach and education, Students from Kerala Agricultural University pursuing studies in agriculture and allied disciplines, Social leaders and contact farmers from the study area and Farm innovators contributing to advancements in coconut cultivation and technology adoption. This diverse pool of respondents ensured that multiple perspectives were incorporated into the study, from traditional custodians of culture to modern innovators and digital consumers.

Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule, developed according to the objectives of the study. To ensure clarity and relevance, a pilot study was conducted in the selected area. Based on the feedback, the final research instrument was structured into five parts:

Part I: Socio-economic, personal, and communication variables of the respondents.

Part II: Cultural expressions and practices associated with coconut.

Part III: Lyrics composed on the Package of Practices (PoP) of coconut, presented for respondent validation.

Part IV: Musical and narrative videos created for dissemination through YouTube, used to assess digital engagement and cultural perception.

Part V: Innovations by farmers and the challenges they face in implementing and scaling new technologies.

Research Engagement and Data Collection Strategy

Prior to formal data collection, multiple visits were made to the study area to build rapport and establish trust with local communities and stakeholders. This groundwork facilitated smoother interactions and in-depth conversations during interviews and site visits. A multi-method approach was employed, which included Personal visits and semi-structured interviews through Google forms, What's app polls, Direct observations and field notes, Participation in cultural rituals and community events, Informal interactions and discussions with resource persons, Visits to temples, shrines, and culturally significant locations, Documentation of social media engagement and user feedback, Collection of relevant secondary data including literature, reports, media articles, and folklore records. This immersive

approach allowed for a holistic understanding of the research subject and the ways in which digital tools are being—or could be—used to preserve and promote the socio-cultural identity connected to the coconut in Kerala.

Social media responses, including comments, reactions, and feedback related to digital content on the socio-cultural relevance of the coconut were used for assessing the effectiveness of digitalisation in dissemination and preservation of information.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge systems and modern dissemination techniques by employing music and social media to explore, document, and communicate the socio-cultural and agricultural relevance of coconut in Kerala. The results, drawn from both ethnographic fieldwork and digital content analysis, reveal multiple layers of insight, each contributing to the innovative extension approach adopted in the research.

1. Integration of Scattered Knowledge into a Unified Narrative

One of the major findings was the fragmentation of knowledge relating to the sociocultural and agricultural dimensions of coconut. Oral traditions, mythologies, proverbs, and localized farming knowledge are held by different community segments—ritual practitioners, artists, elder community members, and innovator farmers—but are largely undocumented in structured formats. Through primary data collection—interviews, performances, rituals, and oral histories—this study has brought together diverse knowledge strands under a single umbrella of digital and cultural archive, which was one of the foundational objectives of the work.

2. Creation of a Thematic Digital Repository: Jaya Palms YouTube Channel

In line with the core objective of disseminating this unified database, the researcher launched a dedicated YouTube channel, “Jaya Palms” (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGZQ1TGhv7aXvIk5plpv51w>), on 12th May 2024 submitted at Department of Extension Education, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, BHU, Varanasi. This channel served as both a platform and a research tool, where narrative and musical videos were uploaded based on the collected data. To date, the channel has uploaded 42 videos, the summary of which is furnished below:

Table 1: content wise summary of the videos uploaded in the youtube channel, Jaya Palms (Source: Jayashree, M.P. & Ghadei, K. (2025))

Sl. No.	Topics related to the Content of the video	Number of videos
1	Songs which already existed (Folk / Filmi / Classical songs)	4
2	Song composed exclusively for this research work	4
3	Dance forms	1
4	Musical instruments	3
5	Proverbs	5
6	Rituals	9
7	ITK	8
8	Sanskrit literature	4
9	Farmer's innovation	2
10	Food	2
	Total no. of videos uploaded (till JUNE 2025)	42

Table 2: Content wise list of the videos uploaded in the Youtube channel, Jaya Palms till May 2025. (Source: Jayashree, M.P. & Ghadei, K. (2025))

Episode No.	Title of the video with Youtube link	Related head in thesis
1	Keravriksham – a song on the greatness of coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2b1L_he91U	Song composed exclusively for this work
2	Aravupaattu, Ammikkallu https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KiW3L64D6g	Folk Song
3	Coconut palms and Mohiniyattam https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVkvETwdEOk	Dance form
4	Coconut proverb 1 – Sampathhu kaalathhu https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8jOqcxSqVA	Proverb
5	Song on Ilaneerattam of Kottiyur temple https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xsEhV1173M	Song composed exclusively for this work
6	Coconut proverb 2 – Sankaran pinneyum thengel thane https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APJHXgNbJQM	Proverb
7a	Kottiyur festaival – part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDYUT1QEx5E	Ritual
7b	Kottiyur festival – part 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxoVknijJeE	Ritual
8	Coconut proverb 3 - Thengu chatthikkilla https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8aJU8H7fwkk	Proverb
9	Thondara https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNJ-GMgC9Y8	ITK
10	Tamil and Hindi proverbs on coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1cqnZCeI50	Proverb
11	Recipe of Prathamam – a much loved sweet dish in Kerala https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8_R6q5Dqnw	Food
12	Thalappu - Traditional coconut climbing and ITKs https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wYrUHDUUCY	ITK
13	Adikkotta – an ITK on coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lluPUP4_Qcc	ITK
14	Coconut proverb - Thenga pathharachhaal https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIEQ6AYtGEI	Proverb
15	Mridangam made of coconut trunk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eo-l4XsjwWI	Musical instrument
16	Bendiya – a sweet made of coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSjwlj5kxfU	Food
17	World Coconut Day – An ode to Coconut palm https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8FJ4ykIDbU	Song (on PoP) composed exclusively for this work
18	Coconut ITK to locate underground water source https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qqAil8Qy8w	ITK
19	Komma – coconut ITK https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yur9_L2y9GE	ITK
20	Pantheerayiram nalikeram – coconut related ritual https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tC_sr6aPTME	Ritual
21	Coconut climbing robot, Farmer's innovation https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Ilp7rAZdiM	Farmer's innovation
22	Movie song on Keralam the land of coconuts https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdwrS-6J98w	Film song
24	Paduvilakkavu thenga pidi – a sportive ritual with coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOwPdQQtqPQ	Ritual
25	Folk songs on coconut https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbAcoxvfxAs	Folk songs / Riddles / Tongue twister song
26	Hindu rituals involving coconut – Parameswaran Namboothiri https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OePTYaEQCI	Ritual
27	Chiratta rasam, coconut shell appetizer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnyjKGBlaMg	ITK
28	Marikothal / Odikothal ritual in Mamanikkunnu temple. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdQVGc2ZTJk	Ritual
29	Coconut in different cults or Aradhana sampradayas https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=it0XrpC4tVc	Ritual
30	Aravupaattu of North Malabar wedding eves https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRLwW2TVkXM	Folk song
31	Song on Pantheerayiram nalikeram ritual – Balussery kotta https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwuxW7l4_z4	Song composed exclusively for this work
32	Nalikeram udaykkal at Neeliyath Akathoot temple https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9yGKUJnFiJg	Ritual

33	Face / body pack with immature coconut bud, Machinga https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sh5uLdYhAFo	ITK
34	Coconut and Sarod – Pandit Anshuman Maharaj ji https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gko5sV2KLM	Musical instrument
35	Sanskrit verse on coconut in Hitopadesha https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moW4gGA2_IJ	Sanskrit literature
36	Sanskrit verse on coconut in Madanapala Nighandu – part 1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvuhmWET28w	Sanskrit literature
37	Sanskrit verse on coconut in Madanapala Nighandu – part 2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z91y-DEBhgA	Sanskrit literature
38	Ayyappa devotional song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHQAYoIwg9o	Rituals
39	Kanda of coconut for feminine health issues https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgi7WHPDGTw	ITK
40	Innovator Farmer speaks on Patency	Farmer's innovation

3. Musical Productions as a Pedagogical and Extension Tool

The content of song videos included both original traditional songs related to coconut-based rituals and practices and the new ones composed exclusively for this research purpose. The music direction and video production were personally led by the researcher, with scripting, editing, and artistic direction tailored to ensure both cultural authenticity and visual engagement. Informed by the pedagogical and communicative strengths of music, the researcher composed and directed four original songs for the channel. These included three thematic songs on the rituals *Ilaneeraattam*, *Pantheerayiram*, and *Sabarimala* traditions (written by Dr. M. P. Giridharan and sung by Jayashree M. P. and M. A. Rajeevkumar), and one comprehensive song on the complete Scientific Package of Practices of Coconut, fully written, composed, and sung by the researcher, after validation by subject matter experts from ICAR-CPCRI. This fourth song, titled “An Ode to Coconut Palm,” was uploaded as the 17th episode on World Coconut Day (2nd September 2024). It became the focal point for analyzing the efficacy of musical media as a tool for agricultural learning.

4. Audience Perception and Statistical Validation of the POP Song

To assess the third research question—Can musical productions and social media platforms be helpful for documentation and dissemination of the agricultural and socio-cultural relevance of Coconut?—a structured Google Form was disseminated to collect responses from 268 individuals on the POP video. The following variables were analyzed:

- **Perception Parameters:** Adequacy and simplicity of lyrics, Audibility and clarity of singing, Relevance and appropriateness of visuals and Message clarity.
- **Dependent Variables:** Overall rating of the video, Difficulty level in memorizing POP before and after watching, Impact on recall/memorization, Perception of shareability and outreach, Audience segmentation (agriculture scholars, musicians, general public) and Previous familiarity with other Jaya Palms videos.

Results indicated high levels of acceptance and effectiveness, with the majority reporting that the video made the package of practices easier to remember, engaging to watch, and worth sharing. Respondents appreciated the

fusion of information and entertainment—validating the utility of music as a creative extension method.

5. Researcher's Prior Experience and Thematic Depth

The researcher's earlier academic work on “Influence of farming culture on the folk arts and rituals of North Malabar region of Kerala state” proved instrumental in framing the context, identifying knowledge holders, and selecting culturally relevant expressions. This background enriched the ethnographic depth and ensured cultural sensitivity in all phases of the project.

6. Expert Endorsements and Rationalization of Cultural Elements

The researcher also documented and reflected upon expert interpretations of various rituals, objects, and performances associated with coconut. These rationalizations help transform belief-based practices into culturally-informed knowledge—adding scientific credibility to traditional expressions. This dual validation—cultural and technical—is a critical step towards wider acceptance and preservation.

Conclusion of Discussion

This research successfully demonstrates that digital and musical storytelling are effective, scalable tools for capturing and disseminating both agricultural and cultural dimensions of a crop as symbolically rich as the coconut. The study not only contributes to academic and extension literature but also provides a model for future initiatives aiming to fuse cultural heritage with modern communication strategies. The YouTube channel, *Jaya Palms*, stands as a testament to the power of creative extension in knowledge sharing and rural transformation.

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