

Role of Social Media in Service Marketing: A Research on Select Hotels and Resorts in Coimbatore District

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Abstract— The hospitality industry is only one that has been profoundly affected by the rise of social media. Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Trip Advisor have all contributed to making social media an essential element of the hotel business. With an emphasis on marketing, customer engagement, reputation management, and overall business growth, this essay investigates the crucial significance of social media in the hospitality sector. Hospitality firms may improve their reach, client experience, brand awareness, and market standing by utilizing the power of social media. The purpose of this research was to analyse how hotels and resorts in Coimbatore use social media, and the results showed a correlation between these businesses' social media strategies.

Keywords— Social Media, Hospitality Sector, Marketing, Customer Engagement, Reputation Management, Business Growth

I. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites (Facebook, Myspace, Pinterest, Instagram) and other forms of online social interaction have expanded rapidly over the past decade. Web 2.0 applications are one

example of how the internet revolution has made formerly static business practices more dynamic and participatory. Businesses' internet usage has increased with the general public. Many businesses today actively use social media as a means of communicating with their millions of followers and potential consumers. In today's fast-paced world driven by social catalysts, businesses need to understand that people enjoy using social media mostly because it satisfies their innate need to connect with other people. This transition from corporations to consumers is reflected in the traditionally bottom-up nature of social media.

Business in India's hospitality sector has been revolutionized by the widespread adoption of social media. The tools used in social media are always evolving. Those businesses that first resisted using social media as part of their marketing strategy have since seen its benefits and are full supporters. Businesses and the hospitality sector in particular, have recognized the value of leveraging social networking sites to drive their online branding strategy, making it simpler to reach their target audience and generating brand equity via specific channels. There are a number of interesting implications for any market from the specifications of social networking sites. These sites give a framework for a rating system

that can be used to build, track, and analyse the reputation and image of the business on the internet, and user-generated content is viewed as very reputable, much more so than information credited to the entity. The rise of Web 2.0 has boosted the profile of user-generated content (UGC), which compiles data from a number of different online resources. Brand recognition and exposure provide the best return on investment, followed by an increase in foot traffic, the attraction of potential business partners, higher search engine rankings, and the generation of new leads. Brand exposure, sales, customer education and information, service quality, and reputation management are all facets of successful social media marketing.

The visibility and awareness that social marketing brings to a company is crucial if it is to win over prospective customers and turn them into devoted patrons. Making marketing-focused, theme-based content is the key to success. As a result, consumers will be more familiar with the brand and more likely to choose it when making service purchases. As more and more people go to online communities like Facebook and Twitter for news and other information, these platforms have become an integral part of hotel marketing plans. You can direct your online marketing efforts at a certain demographic by utilizing social media marketing. Interests, age, region, and other demographics can all be used to target certain audiences with specific advertisements. Reaching your intended customers requires the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.

The reviews on these sites can make or break a hotel's reputation. Nowadays, even for a local eatery, customers will look to social media for reviews. As a result, it's not optional for hotels to use social media to promote themselves, and it doesn't cost much. Advertisements created for social media networks outweigh those for print or electronic media in terms of longevity. Unlike printed and digital media, it does not have a shelf

life. In addition, hotels can only obtain responses from social media users, not those who have seen the ad in print or on television.

Providing excellent service is crucial, but it's only half the equation if you want to keep your guests coming back. A growing number of companies are relying on social media to stay connected with their clientele. Thanks to social media, informing hotel guests of upcoming activities is a breeze. A simple "like" or comment might go a long way towards cementing their friendship. Customers like the ease with which they may provide genuine feedback via social media. Since many potential guests check the evaluations of previously satisfied guests before booking a room at a new hotel, positive ratings can have a significant financial impact. On social media, even A-listers talk about the benefits of spending quality time with them.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the advent of social media, hitherto passive users have become active participants in the creation and dissemination of knowledge. It has a wide variety of websites that cater to diverse audiences with specialised content. Internet forums, message boards, weblogs, wikis, podcasts, images, and videos are all examples of social media. Blogs, image sharing, logs, wall posts, email, IM, music sharing, group creation, and voice over IP are just a few examples of these technologies. Consumers are more interested in UGC than they are in other types of social media. Social media marketing is a relatively recent strategy for establishments in the hospitality sector.

With the help of social media, customers can engage with a company in real time through its website. In order to track and analyse guests' shifting tastes in entertainment and dining options, hotels and restaurants have begun incorporating social media into their marketing strategies. Many businesses still don't understand social media and aren't sure how to effectively use it for marketing,

which is why they're missing out. 1. The main aim of this paper is to analyse how hotels and resorts in Coimbatore use social media as a tool for service marketing.

Shankar and Yashwanth (2023) described that social media through its influencers is playing lead role in the business development. Khatri (2019) notes that the widespread adoption of IT in the tourist and hospitality sector's core strategic activities has resulted in profound shifts in the industry. Both the healthy rivalry among businesses and the constant flow of new ideas and practices fuel this dynamic. To keep up with the competition and adapt to the constant stream of new disruptions, it is necessary to employ some type of information technology. V. Sivakumar and Shankar R. (2019) opined that social media has a significant influence on women consumers in their purchases. According to Sainy (2018), now is the moment for hospitality organisations to harness the potential of social media for branding, marketing, and increasing consumer involvement, all of which contribute to higher customer satisfaction, more leads generated, and more repeat business.

The hospitality industry may benefit greatly from utilizing social media for the dissemination of brand information, the active participation of customers in the form of reviews, and the proactive management of customer complaints by providing an instant response. Using data from five-star hotels in Northern Cyprus, Ibrahim and Aljarah (2018) found a correlation between several SMM factors and guests' propensity to return. The study looks into how the tourism service industry may benefit from SMM efforts to increase brand loyalty and return visits. Kalaivani and Shankar (2017) stressed the importance of promotional activities in the consumer buying decision. They stated that the promotional activities will largely influence the consumers' purchases. In addition to the proliferation of social media platforms, increased consumer choice, and

technical advancement, the significance of Consumer-Generated Content (CGC) is highlighted by Dedeoglu et al. (2020). According to Kervenoael (2020), social robots are now often used in the hotel industry. It is thus critical for the long-term success of such services that we have an empirical understanding of the factors that motivate visitors to make use of robots. Organisational commitment to value creation and meeting service quality requirements is essential when implementing social androids into hospitality services.

III. METHODOLOGY

30 marketing department officials and staff in charge of back-office activities relating SM at sample hotels and resorts have been surveyed using standardized questionnaires to compile the primary data. Additionally, in-depth understanding of the complexities of social media marketing techniques has been gained through in-depth interviews with the concerned sample respondents. Our secondary sources for this article include published books, journals, government documents, periodicals, newspapers, reports, and the internet.

Role of Social Media in Hospitality Industry

Define abbreviations and acronyms the first time they are used in the text, even after they have been defined in the abstract. Abbreviations such as IEEE, SI, MKS, CGS, sc, dc, and rms do not have to be defined. Do not use abbreviations in the title or heads unless they are unavoidable.

1) Sharing Information :

Hotels use a wide variety of social media platforms to disseminate unique types of content. You can utilise Youtube to create a video library showcasing the hotel, its facilities, and local attractions. In addition to this professional interview, you can also capture interactions with your staff and customers and share them on YouTube. Hotels and their surrounding environs

can be showcased through photo sharing sites like Flickr and Pinterest. The hotel's most recent content and deal updates can be shared on Facebook. The key benefit of information sharing via social media is that it helps reduce call centre traffic, improves customer experiences, and facilitates better decision-making.

2) *Online Customer Engagement:*

By holding contests and using gamification methods on social media, hotels are able to attract clients online and generate buzz around the brand. Customers with a greater sense of belonging to a group are more likely to stick with a business that encourages their participation in online activities. User engagement can be boosted through gamification by adding a sense of friendly competition.

3) *Just In Time Marketing:*

With the use of social media, hotels can engage in "just in time" marketing, in which they provide clients with timely, relevant, and personalized market discounts and promotions. The sector relies heavily on locally based applications in order to advertise products and services to customers that are relevant to their present needs.

4) *Extending Concierge Services*

Help can be requested from anywhere, not only the front desk, using social media platforms like Twitter. The concierge service will be able to answer your questions. Concierge services at hotels allow guests to ask questions online via social media and get prompt responses from hotel staff.

5) *Service Recovery*

Negative comments and reviews are frequently posted on social media. If the hotel does not respond to or address these guest complaints in a timely manner, the hotel's image may suffer. Effective service recovery boosts customer loyalty because it makes consumers happy.

6) *User-Generated Content Boost Hospitality Marketing*

How often do you look through your friends' and family's vacation images on social media? They unwittingly advertise their stays every time they share a snapshot of their hotel on social media or mention the resort in a tweet. User-generated content refers to digital word-of-mouth advertising in the forms of images, videos, tweets, blog posts, and status updates. The term "fan" refers to an individual who promotes a product or service without receiving anything. User-generated content (UGC) is a potent marketing tool, and the hospitality industry can benefit greatly from its application.

7) *Showcase Hotel Facilities and Offerings*

Sharing images from their stay at your hotel on social media gives fans an opportunity to showcase your establishment to their extended social circle. By posting pictures of them lounging by the pool with a drink in hand, they give potential guests a taste of what it would be like to stay at your resort. People typically learn about the unique features of a hotel or what sets it apart from others through user-generated content. People can notice from the comments that you are a family-friendly business or that you accept pets. Even if this information is featured prominently on your website and other materials, nothing beats a guest's eye witness account of the hotel's extra amenities.

8) *Build Trust and Brand Awareness*

Hotel guests would rather view "raw" images than those that have been heavily edited or staged for use on company websites. Nielsen found that 92% of customers have more faith in user-generated content than they do in commercials. This is why UGC is being used more and more by social media marketers. It's a great way to earn the confidence of your target market. When your social media accounts only include owned content, it gives off an egocentric and product-

focused vibe. The most effective method of advertising is still word-of-mouth. By using user-generated content, you can show your audience how actual people are using and praising your products and services.

IV. CURRENT SOCIAL MEDIA PRACTICES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

A Current social media practices in the hospitality industry are constantly evolving as businesses adapt to changing trends and consumer behaviors. Here are some of the key practices that hospitality establishments are implementing on social media platforms:

A. Content Creation and Curation

High-quality content is a must for hospitality companies looking to attract and retain customers. They promote their establishments, services, restaurants, and local attractions with visually appealing photographs, videos, and articles. The goal of a lot of hospitality-related content is to make the reader feel something, get them excited about travelling, or both.

B. Influencer Collaborations

The hospitality business is one of the fastest-growing areas for influencer marketing. Companies work with social media stars whose enormous fan bases also include their ideal customers. They tell their followers about their experiences there, praising the places and encouraging others to check them out. By gaining the endorsement of an influential person, your brand will gain more exposure, access a wider audience, and earn credibility.

C. User-Generated Content

Hotels and other hospitality organisations love it when their customers share their positive experiences on social media with a special hashtag or by tagging their account. As a form of social proof and genuine insight into the guest

experience, user-generated content is invaluable. Businesses frequently use user-generated content to brag about customers' pleasant experiences and interact with their target demographic.

D. Real-Time Engagement

Businesses in the hospitality industry actively engage with customers in real time by quickly replying to customer comments, messages, and reviews. They respond to questions, share data, and make suggestions based on individual circumstances. Taking the time to get to know their customers on a personal level shows that the business cares about them and their business.

E. Social Media Advertising

To reach their customers, hotels and motels use social media advertising that is specifically tailored to them. Offers, bundles, and discounts are promoted using demographic and interest-based targeting. Businesses may better manage their marketing budgets, monitor the efficacy of their campaigns, and evaluate their return on investment by using social media advertising.

F. Online Reputation Management

When it comes to managing their online reputation, hospitality firms can't ignore the importance of social media. They keep an eye on online forums, review sites, and social media to see what people are saying about the business. Businesses that publicly respond to customer reviews—both favourable and negative—and resolve customers' issues demonstrate their openness to feedback and dedication to ensuring their needs are met.

G. Influencing Booking Decisions

Social media is being utilised by the hospitality industry to sway guests' final reservations. On their social media pages, they highlight the high ratings and good comments left by their guests. In addition, companies lead customers straight to their own booking systems or websites via convenient links.

H. Social Listening and Insights

Analytics and insights from social media are used by the hospitality industry to better comprehend their clientele, track market trends, and learn about their clients' preferences. Businesses may improve their marketing, product, and service offerings, as well as spot new opportunities, with the aid of these insights.

I. Integration with Other Marketing Channels

The brand's social media presence is coordinated with its other advertising efforts. Through addition to promoting themselves online and through email newsletters, hotels often advertise their social media accounts in other ways. By combining the two, we can increase engagement on social media, reach a wider audience, and keep our brand's voice constant.

J. Collaboration with Local Influencers and Partners

Hospitality firms work with tourism boards, influencers, and related industries to market area attractions. Cross-promotion and word-of-mouth are just two of the many benefits that might result from this partnership with the destination.

TABLE 1: SOCIAL MEDIA IN HOTELS AND RESORTS

Constructs	x2	p
Content Creation and Curation	3.62	.001**
Influencer Collaborations	15.82	.002**
User-Generated Content	16.99	.032*
Real-Time Engagement	124.51	.049*
Social Media Advertising	1.36	.050*
Online Reputation Management	59.88	.006**
Influencing Booking Decisions	13.15	.008**
Social Listening and Insights	.47	.045*
Integration with Other Marketing Channels	24.83	.002**
Collaboration with Local Influencers and Partners	18.95	.024*

Source: Primary data (* - 5% significance; ** - 1% significance)

It's worth noting that every hospitality business has its own unique size, clientele, location, and objectives, all of which can have a significant impact on how they use social media. Since social media platforms are always changing, businesses need to be flexible in order to keep up with the times and engage their target audiences successfully.

The Table I present the analysis of association between the social media usage among the hotels and restaurants. It can be cleared from the table that all the constructs are significant at 5 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and concluded that there is an association between the social media usage among the hotels and resorts.

V. CONCLUSION

The hospitality industry has been revolutionized by the rise of social media in terms of marketing, customer involvement, reputation management, and overall business expansion. Hospitality businesses may improve their brand's visibility, expand their customer base, and provide better service all thanks to the proliferation of social media. Targeted marketing initiatives, increased client loyalty, and more direct reservations are all possible thanks to the reach and interactivity of social media. Relationships with customers can be further strengthened through the usage of social media thanks to its ability to facilitate personalized engagement, real-time exchanges, and the sharing of user-generated content. Maintaining a favourable image and gaining the trust of potential clients is essential for the success of any business, and this is where social media reputation management comes in. Finally, businesses may use social media analytics and insights to improve their operations, develop more effective strategies, and spot untapped markets for expansion. The importance of social media in the hotel industry is only expected to grow, thus it is imperative that businesses learn to use this growing resource effectively.

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