

# Social Media as a Tool of Marketing: A Study of Hospitality Industry

Yogitha L J <sup>1</sup>

Faculty Member,

Dept. of Commerce, Maharaja's College, University of Mysore

## Abstract

The internet revolution has shifted the business practises into more complex and interactive manner. Nowadays, the use of internet and social media has become an integral part of business strategies. In the hospitality industry, social media has become the best way to promote business and it presents the new form of communication between hotels and customers. The objective if this paper is to understand the concept and to study the current social media practices in the hospitality industry. This paper further considers significant reasons for adopting social media marketing as a part of marketing strategy in hospitality industry.

**Keywords:** social media marketing, Hospitality industry, marketing strategy

## Introduction

Nowadays, the use of internet and social media has become an integral part of business strategies. Social media marketing emerged as the modern marketing tool. With the emergence of internet / information technology revolution, the way of doing business changed warranting businesses to adopt the new technology. So, nowadays, businesses are using internet / information technology to market their products and services. Social media marketing involves lower cost. It saves time for the marketer compared to other marketing tools. The internet has revolutionized communication, allowing individuals and organization to overcome geographical and time barriers. This in turn allows customers and companies to connect with the rest of the world at any time. Online communities allow people to get together on the internet for various purposes. They can thus search for and share information, discuss communal issues and exchange pleasantries.

With rapid changes pervading information technology, the online activities are now performed by exploiting a new form of communication technology called “Web 2.0” or social media. The Web 2.0-driven internet revolution has rendered business practices more complex and more interactive.

### **Social media marketing**

Social media marketing makes use of social media sites to raise visibility on the Internet and promote products and services. Social media sites are useful for building social (and business) networks, and exchanging ideas and knowledge. Social media marketing uses podcasts, wikis, blogs, online videos, photo sharing, news sharing, message boards, and posts on social networking sites to reach a large or targeted audience.

### **Hospitality industry**

Hospitality is the relationship between a guest and a host. Hospitality is the act or practice of being hospitable. The tourism and hospitality industries are related to each other. Hospitality is the act of welcoming, receiving, hosting or entertaining a guest. Hospitality reflects courtesy and respect to the guest. Hospitality occupies local services such as entertainment, accommodation and catering for tourists. It is the business of providing catering, lodging and entertainment service and welcoming, receiving, hosting, or entertaining guests. The hospitality industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, and additional fields within the tourism industry.

### **Social media marketing in hospitality industries**

In the hospitality industry, social media has become the best way to promote business. It is really a powerful platform since the target audience, by and large, is easily found on these social media platforms. In the hospitality industry, Hotels and Resorts have been using social media marketing as a new approach to promote their business. By using social media they can reach customers easily, raise brand awareness, promote their products and services and enhance customer loyalty. They can tap new customers and raise their sales in value terms and volume terms. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and blogs are among the most commonly used. Customers get to know more about resorts and hotels. Customers also get to know more about the hospitality industry courtesy its presence in the social media, its fan following, its guest reviews, etc.

### **Objectives of the study**

To understand the concept and to study the current social media practices in the hospitality industry

### **Research methodology**

The current study attempt to explain the concept of social media marketing and its marketing strategies in hospitality industry. It is a conceptual research which is bases on literature review.

### **Sources of Data**

Secondary data collected from journals, research articles, and publications.

### **Review of literature**

**Leung et al. (2013)** in their research paper. “The Marketing Effectiveness of Social Media in the Hotel Industry: A Comparison of Facebook and Twitter” explores the marketing effectiveness of two different social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter) in the hotel industry. The study reveals that hotel customers using social media are influenced in their attitudes towards the hotel’s brand.

**Mandy et al. (2012)** in their article entitled “Social Media Marketing in selected UK Luxury Hotels” states that social media marketing is one of the fastest growing forms of online marketing in UK’s service sector. UK hotels have been involving these networks into their overall marketing strategies. The study explores how 4 and 5 star UK hotels have involved social media networks into their marketing strategies, highlights why the hotel guests use social media and reveals how the social media pages should be presented. The study finds that UK hotels use social networking sites to keep in touch with the expectation of the existing target market, attract new customers and stay ahead of competition.

**Iva et al. (2012)** in their article entitled “Social media marketing in hotel companies: A case study of an innovative approach to CRM via Facebook at Maistra Inc. Croatia” explores the involvement of entertainment staff in social media marketing as an innovative approach to CRM through Facebook. Their study reveals that entertainment staff are the only employees whose main task is entertaining guest. So the Maistra Inc engaged its entertainment staff to implement its social media marketing strategy.

**Kalasker (2013)** in an article entitled “Marketing strategies for standalone hotels: with reference to Mayur Aaditya resort, Dharwad, India” ascertains the marketing strategies used by the resort. Traditional marketing strategies do not serve the purpose. The researcher has suggested new marketing strategies and plans like online hotel marketing, creating Facebook pages, opening twitter accounts for marketing, uploading videos, blogs, pictures and social media. These help standalone hotels like Mayur Aaditya resort to sustain and grow in this dynamic competitive world.

**Roxanne (2013)** in his research paper “The effectiveness of Social Media Marketing as a Branding tool for hoteliers” identifies the innovative practices adopted by the Maltese hospitality industry. The researcher also examines the effectiveness and the extent of usage of social media marketing to drive potential branding. The study found that social media marketing is effective in driving the corporates’ branding strategy.

**Inversini et al (2014)** in their article entitled “Selling rooms online: The use of Social Media and Online Travel Agents” examine why hoteliers choose online travel agent (OTA) and social media for the purpose of sale. The study reveals that innovative social booking technologies will raise their visibility and sales.

**Preetika et al (2015)** in the article entitled “Social Media channels used by Hotels” ascertains the details of social media tools used by hotels for marketing. The study reveals that social media marketing has become a popular marketing tool for the country’s hotels. The hotels must keep in mind that they should remain in communication with the customer whether their reviews are positive or negative. It is very important for the hotel concerned to maintain relations with the customer, both existing and potential, in an uninterrupted manner and thus retain them.

**Aarti (2015)** in her article entitled “Indian Hotel Industry: Transformation through Digital Marketing” examines how Indian hotels are using digital marketing as a marketing tool. The study reveals that social media has more impact on the hotel industry since nowadays, most of the people use social media for any bookings, hotel reservations, etc. They also use the media to ascertain the facilities the hoteliers are providing. Indian hotels must use social media as their marketing strategy so they can create brand awareness, engender a fan following and reach the customers easily. They can ensure a cordial relationship with customers.

**Andrea (2015)** in his research article “The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media in the hospitality industry. A study of the north east region of Romania” “The study focused on what are the Key benefits and challenges of Social Media for hotel industry. Romania hotels are at the initial

stages of understating and exploring Social Media in to promote their business. Hotels should thing after how effectively they can use Social Media to reach the customer and to retain both existing and potential customers.

**Richard et al (2015)** in their research paper “Restaurant Social Media usage in China: A study of industry practices and consumer preferences” examine the use of social media by restaurants in China. They also examine the extent to which consumers exploit it to obtain information. Their study reveals that restaurants use social media to improve their presence and update their services on all parameters. Additionally they want to connect better with the customer.

**Kavitha et al (2016)** in the article entitled “Is social hotel the future of Indian hospitality?” examine the concept of *social hotel* and its relevance to the Indian hospitality industry. They seek to understand the future of social media marketing and the relevance of social hotels. Their research reveals that the concept of social media for hotels unveils an opportunity to build loyalty and improve engagement with the guests. To differentiate from its competitors and connect well with the customers, a hotel must include the social media tool in its operations.

**Samaan et al (2016)** in their research paper “The effect of Social Media Marketing in the Hotel industry: conceptual model for development of an effective online community” analyse the benefits accruing from members’ participation. They examine the relationship obtaining between community participation and brand commitment in hotel online communities. Their study finds that members who participate in online community hope to gain some specific benefits which are functional, social, psychological, hedonic and monetary in nature. They also suggest some strategy like analyzing the consumer’s posts on the brand pages, immediate action based on both complementary reviews and complaints about service.

#### **Reasons for social media adoptions**

1. Create brand awareness
2. Relationship building
3. Increase customer loyalty
4. Increase customer retention
5. Increase customer base
6. Improve activity metrics (website activity, followers)

## Conclusion

From the above literature review it was found social media has proved an effective mode of communication and an effective mode of marketing of the hospitality industry. In today's competitive business environment, the hospitality industry must adopt social media as a marketing tool for promoting business and reaching prospective customers. Hence, hospitality industry should design and host their own websites, open accounts with Facebook, Twitter and many more social networking sites so they can post informative photographs, furnish comprehensive information about themselves, about their facilities and their offers. They should enable the customers to book online. By using social media channels the hospitality industry can communicate directly with customers, promote its brand more effectively, enhance its reputation, retain customers, raise customer loyalty and raise sales.

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