



A study of social media marketing with reference to Hospitality sector

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Abstract

The hospitality sector is quite diverse and includes a wide range of categories and industries, including the hotel business, aviation, food and beverage, travel, and tourism, to mention a few. There is a greater requirement from management and industry professionals to understand how guests choose hotels to stay in and what are the dominant decision-making criteria as a result of the hospitality industry's and the hotel sector's strong expansion in recent years. In addition, this study's objective is to thoroughly examine and examine the literature on the aspects that social media marketing influences. In addition, despite years of research, it appears that we still know very little about how guests choose their hotel accommodations and the key hotel characteristics because this topic may be subjective and challenging to analyze. This is also influenced by the fact that the majority of earlier studies concentrated on choice attributes rather than the actual decision-making process; consequently, this paper will attempt to investigate a wide range of literature in order to establish best research practices and make suggestions for future studies. This essay also looks at literature on hotel-related topics and client decision-making, both of which are crucial in the rapidly expanding hospitality sector.

Introduction

Social media marketing is the process of using social media platforms and websites to promote a product or service. By utilizing user engagement, content creation, and advertising campaigns, businesses can increase their brand awareness and gain new customers. With so many people connected to social networks on a daily basis, these platforms offer vast opportunities to reach potential customers in an efficient manner (Constantinides, 2014). Social media marketing is also used by businesses to build relationships with existing customers and engage them in conversations about their brand or products (Stephen Andrew T, 2016; Zarrella, 2009; Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Hospitality is a broad industry that includes tourism, hotels, lodging, food service, and event planning. The hospitality sector covers a wide range of services and activities to meet the needs of travelers and tourists. It includes restaurants, bars, lodges, resorts, conference centers, spas and more. Many people work in the hospitality industry as managers or staff members in these facilities. They often have to provide excellent customer service while ensuring all safety regulations are met (Ionel, 2016;).

Social media marketing is an invaluable tool for the hospitality sector. It allows businesses to reach large numbers of people in both their local area and beyond, target potential customers with tailored content, increase brand visibility and improve customer service by responding quickly and effectively to customer queries. It can also be used to build relationships with customers, advertise special offers or discounts, explore new markets and research customer feedback. Social media marketing also helps hotels create a sense of loyalty amongst travellers as well as boost their online reputation through positive reviews (Dwivedi et al., 2015; Sigala, 2015).

Literature Review

The customers' journey in hospitality has been studied extensively in the literature, from the first contact to post-visit touch points. Here are some of the key themes and research findings:

Culinary Tourism: A Comprehensive Approach to Hospitality and Tourism by Ionel, M. (2016) This book provides an overview of the contemporary hospitality and tourism industry, with a focus on culinary tourism – a growing trend in which tourists seek out and experience local food, drink, and culture. The book covers topics such as trends in culinary tourism, the history and current state of the industry, marketing strategies for hospitality businesses targeting culinary travelers, best practices for engaging with local stakeholders to create meaningful tourism experiences, the social impacts of food culture events on cultural identity and heritage conservation efforts. It is intended as a comprehensive guide to professional practitioners in hospitality management, travel & tourism industry professionals looking to develop or enhance their knowledge base concerning culinary-related activities within their destinations or accommodations.

Hospitality Management: An Introduction by Lubowiecki-Vikuk et al. (2023). This introductory textbook focuses on providing an overview of the fundamental concepts related to how hotels operate across all levels of management from front office management through housekeeping operations. It includes topics related to guest services such as reservation procedures; marketing strategies; legal aspects; safety measures; customer service skills; technology applications in hospitality operations; restaurant operations; beverage service fundamentals; financial control systems; event planning essentials including catering services.; human resources basics such as selection interviewing techniques are also discussed..

Stylos, & Vassiliadis, (2015), this study provides an introduction into some of the key principles that underpin successful hotel management today – from conceptualizing a business idea through operational implementation processes including recruitment processes right up until successful completion upon receipt of payment from customers/guests at front desk check out stages.. It covers commercial considerations such as developing competitive pricing structures alongside optimizing sales opportunities through effective revenue management

techniques whilst also exploring insights into labor laws governing hotel employment agreements so that employers can remain compliant with rules/regulations during times when expansion plans need implementation.

The Effects of Economic Recession on the Hospitality Industry: Evidence from Greece: This paper provides an overview of the impact of the global economic crisis on the hospitality industry in Greece. It examines how this event has affected firm performance, consumer behavior, and employee morale within the sector. Additionally, it analyzes strategies that companies have adopted to respond to these changes and considers how employees can be supported during difficult times. Furthermore, recommendations are made for industry stakeholders in terms of best practices for responding to similar situations in the future (Minazzi, Lagrosen, 2013)

An Exploration into Hospitality Management by Utama & Susanto (2017) This paper discusses some key components that define hospitality management including leadership and organizational culture; customer service; marketing; accounting and finance; operations management; strategic planning and human resources management. Additionally, it reflects upon some current challenges facing these fields such as technology advancement and global competition as well as potential solutions that may be adopted by organizations in order to remain competitive within the sector.

(Jones & Comfort, 2019), The Relevance of Sustainability Practices & Strategies in Hospitality Industry: This paper examines sustainability practices within hospitality organizations focusing primarily on their relevance for improving Performance satisfaction ratings amongst customers while contributing towards environmental protection goals set out by governments globally through frameworks like Global Compact 2020 Agenda 2030 or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It further explores potential strategies that could be implemented from both a business perspective as well as a customer service point of view with respect to sustainability measures across various sectors including food & beverage services or accommodation facilities among others

Pre-arrival: Pre-arrival activities are essential for creating a successful customer experience. Studies have found that customers respond positively to personalized messages about discounts and loyalty rewards, as well as promotions tailored to their interests. Customers also expect seamless service during pre-booking and arrival processes, such as an efficient check-in process or personalized welcome amenities.

During stay: The quality of guest service at hotels is an important determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Studies suggest that guests who receive prompt responses to their requests, attentive interactions with staff members, helpful solutions to problems, etc., tend to be more satisfied than those who do not receive such services. Additionally, providing special touches like music playing in elevators or lobby areas can create a pleasant atmosphere that enhances the overall experience for guests during their stay at the hotel.

Post-stay: Post-stay activities remain essential for keeping customers engaged even after they have left your property; this includes sending thank you notes or follow up emails with feedback surveys, which allow you to measure customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement in terms of overall service delivery.

By understanding what made their stay memorable or what could have been improved upon during their visit through these surveys can help hospitality businesses continue improving guests' experiences across all stages of travel throughout future visits (Alves et al.2016).

Importance of social media marketing in hospitality sector

Social media marketing is one of the most powerful tools for influencing customers in the hospitality sector. It enables businesses to interact with their target audience and build relationships with them, creating a stronger connection between the brand and its loyal customers. With social media, hospitality businesses can reach larger audiences across multiple platforms and create an interactive platform for feedback from both existing and potential customers (Khan & Abir, 2021; Seth, 2012).

Using social media in the hospitality industry also provides an opportunity to showcase products and services to prospective customers who may not have been aware of them had it not been for online visibility. Through strategically placed content like images, videos, stories, promotions, etc., businesses can increase their visibility on platforms like Facebook or Twitter while gaining valuable customer insights on how they respond to different campaigns or strategies. Social media can also be used as a platform to reward loyalty by offering special discounts or exclusive offers that will further entice potential clients into engaging with your business (O'Connor & Murphy, 2004; Minazzi & Lagrosen, 2013).

Finally, social media marketing allows hoteliers to measure performance metrics more accurately than ever before. By leveraging data analytics tools such as Google Analytics or Sprout Social's Insights report, you can track key metrics such as follower growth rate over time or engagement levels of each post type you publish on each specific platform. This allows you to better understand what content resonates best with your target audience so that you can adjust your strategy accordingly in order maximize engagement levels over time (Rosman & Stuhura, 2013).

Influencing factors for choice of hotels by consumers

- 1. Location:** Consumers often prioritize location when choosing a hotel. They look for hotels that are conveniently located near popular tourist attractions, restaurants, airports, and public transportation hubs.
- 2. Price:** Price is a major factor in choosing a hotel for many consumers. People tend to compare prices of different hotels and choose the one that offers the best value for their money. Price is an important factor when choosing a hotel, restaurant or other hospitality provider. Customers want to make sure they are getting good value for their money when selecting a provider or destination for their travels.
- 3. Amenities:** Consumers often take into account amenities offered by hotels when making their decision. Hotels with better amenities such as on-site restaurants, fitness centers, pools, spas and other features will attract more customers than those without them.
- 4. Reputation:** The reputation of a hotel can also influence consumer's choice of accommodations greatly; reviews from previous customers can provide insight into what type of experience one may expect from certain establishments before making a reservation or booking online.

5 Reviews & Ratings: Feedback from online travel reviews and rating systems can give travelers an idea about how well past guests liked the hotel they stayed at based on criteria such as cleanliness, comfort level etc., which helps them make an informed decision before booking a room with any particular establishment.

6 Service Quality: The quality of the services offered is a major factor in hospitality choice. Customers expect friendly, courteous, and responsive service from hospitality providers. Many customers also evaluate the quality of their experience based on the cleanliness and overall comfort of the facility (Wong Ooi Mei et al., 1999).

7. Security: Safety and security are important considerations when selecting a place to stay or eat out at, especially if traveling with family members or young children. Knowing that all safety measures are in place can help customers feel more secure during their stay or meal out at an unfamiliar location.

8. Location: For many people, convenience can be a big factor in where they choose to stay and eat during travels or vacations; being close to attractions, shopping outlets, nightlife spots etc., can all be attractive features when deciding on an accommodation option for travelers and diners alike.

Some other factors also highlighted by the authors like service quality, people management, operational efficiency, professionalism and work ethics, customer satisfaction, technology adoption & upgradation, hygiene standards & practices, regulatory compliance & safety measures (Slattery, 2002).

Today's scenario of social media marketing in Hospitality sector

Social media marketing in the hospitality industry is growing rapidly as a powerful tool to reach potential customers and build brand loyalty. Companies are increasingly realizing the need to create an online presence that helps them interact with current and potential customers, giving them a competitive edge over their competitors (Leung et al., 2013).

Social media can be used in various ways, from sharing photos of hotel rooms or popular tourist attractions to providing tips on local activities or offers, from running contests and giveaways to actively engaging with guests through reviews. Social platforms provide an opportunity for direct communication between the two parties, where companies can respond quickly to feedback or queries while also collecting valuable information about customer preferences (Minazzi, 2017; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

Companies are also using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter for content marketing strategies such as creating campaigns that target different groups of people based on age, geography and interests. Hotels have used Instagram stories or live streaming services such as Facebook Live for virtual tours of their facilities for potential guests who may not be able to travel due to current circumstances. Additionally, hospitality businesses are using influencer marketing tactics whereby they partner with influential people in order to gain exposure and increase brand awareness among a wider audience (Javadian Dehkordi et al., 2012; Kansakar et al., 2019).

Overall, social media has become essential for hotels looking to optimize their business models by getting closer with customers while expanding reach across new markets.

Conclusion

Social media marketing can play an important role in a consumer's choice of hotels. Consumers are increasingly using social media platforms to research and book their accommodations, with many travelers turning to user-generated reviews and recommendations from friends or influencers to make their decisions. Through engaging content, hoteliers can leverage social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter and LinkedIn to reach potential guests at the right moment in the travel journey. Social media provides a platform for hotels to showcase their amenities, services and special promotions as well as interact directly with guests by responding quickly to inquiries or complaints. Additionally, through online advertising campaigns on social networks like Facebook Ads Manager or Google Ads (formerly Google Adwords), hotels can target users based on specific interests related to travel and hospitality. In this way, hotels have the opportunity to influence consumers' decisions about where they will stay during their trips.

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