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Influence of digital marketing in hospitality sector: A study with reference to hotel industry

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Abstract

Since the Internet became a part of life, life has become easier. When it comes to the Hotel industry, they generally maintain a website for showcasing the services and facilities they provide. They started planning to market their website, establish their online presence, and establish their brand online. This study explains how the Hotel industry was able to promote the services online to gain the support it needed. Also, customer preferences are analyzed, which assist the hotel industry to make a choice between social media and conventional media. Study results show that the factors like Images and Offers influence people's behavior on hotel's websites. Additionally, the study focuses on the factors that influence people to become loyal customers, which include the hotel experience.

Keywords: Digital marketing, services, hospitality services, hotel industry, consumer behavior

Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has brought about a paradigm shift in various industries, and the hospitality sector is no exception. The advent of digital marketing has ushered in a new era of opportunities and challenges for hotels, redefining the way they engage with customers, promote their offerings, and stay competitive in an increasingly dynamic marketplace. This study delves into the profound influence of digital marketing within the hospitality sector, with a specific focus on its implications for the hotel industry. As travelers' behaviors and preferences evolve in the digital age, understanding how digital marketing strategies shape guest experiences, brand perceptions, and revenue streams has become paramount.

By investigating the multifaceted interplay between digital marketing and the hotel sector, this study seeks to uncover the intricate dynamics that drive success in the contemporary hospitality landscape. With the growing prevalence of online platforms, social media, and mobile applications, this study aims to illuminate the strategies that hotels employ to harness the potential of digital marketing, and how these strategies resonate with the ever-changing expectations of modern travelers.

Through a nuanced exploration of user behaviors, preferences, and industry trends, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital marketing not only impacts hotel operations but also shapes the overall guest journey, from the initial point of contact to the culmination of their stay. By laying the foundation for further inquiry, this study aspires to equip hotel practitioners, marketers, and industry stakeholders with insights that will help them navigate the digital landscape effectively and cultivate lasting connections with their target audiences.

Review of literature

Rita, Silva, Ana Sampaio, Pedro Rodrigues (2019) ^[1] According to the author the role of digital marketing as an influencer which influences the buying intention of the customer, so the study was carried out under the topic of The Role of Digital Influencer on Buying Intention. Brand owners often use the internet as a platform to build their brand. The author explains how brand loyalty and the customer loyalty gets influenced by digital advertisement.

Siakalli and Masouras (2016) ^[2] investigated the use of e-marketing strategies in the hotel industry in Cyprus. They found that hotels in Cyprus do not fully exploit the e-marketing capabilities and recommend that hotels implement more comprehensive e-marketing

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strategies in order to innovate their products and attract more customers. Dr. Aarti Mahendru (2015) ^[3] the author carried the study on Indian Hotel Industry. Transformation through Digital Marketing. The author claims that because the consumer journey is changing, firms must change how they calculate the return on their digital marketing investments. Hotels constantly use a variety of marketing strategies to enhance their commercial performance. According to the author the customer journey is evolving, so businesses need to alter their approach to measuring digital marketing ROI. Hotels always adopt various marketing practices to improve their business performance. The characteristic of the hotel is identified by following the criteria that is used by the specified set of market practices. And it analyzed the reason for hotels to follow the practices and the way that digital marketing supports them increasing ROI.

Andrew T. Stephen (2015) ^[4] According to the author as the study on The Role of Digital and Social Media Marketing in Consumer Behavior, stated in his study i.e. five major components that drives the customer behavior, i.e. Advertising, consumer digital culture, Digital Environment, Mobile, Online word of mouth and Reviews. As a result, he examined the areas where customers are drawn to the benefits of digital marketing as they encounter adverts online, and he studied their reactions and challenges.

Liang Wang, Rob Law, and Basak Denizci Guillet (2015) ^[5] investigated the impact of hotel website quality on online booking intentions, with e-trust as a mediator. They found that hotel website quality has a positive impact on e-trust, which in turn has a positive impact on online booking intentions. This means that by investing in hotel website development, hotels can create a trusting relationship with customers, which can lead to more online bookings. The study found that hotel website quality is a strong predictor of e-trust, which in turn mediates the relationship between website quality and consumers' online booking intentions. This means that hoteliers can increase online bookings by improving their website quality and building trust with customers.

Norman Au and Erdogan H. Ekiz (2012) ^[6] investigated the challenges and opportunities of internet hotel marketing in developing countries by conducting a study in Northern Cyprus and Hong Kong. Study found that hoteliers in Hong Kong were more likely to use professional website designers and launch their websites earlier than their counterparts in Northern Cyprus. Study in Hong Kong and Northern Cyprus found that hoteliers in Hong Kong were more likely to use professional website designers and launch their websites earlier than their counterparts in Northern Cyprus. The study also found that internet marketing helped hotels in Hong Kong to gain more customers. These findings suggest that internet marketing can be a valuable tool for hoteliers in developing countries.

Qi Wei, Catherine Cheung, and Rob Law (2010) ^[8] examined the factors that influence tourists' adoption of online channels for hotel bookings. The study found that the perceptions of the channel and socio-demographics have a significant impact on tourists' choice of hotel booking channels. Tourists who make hotel reservations through online channels perceive significantly higher benefits of online channels and lower service quality of offline channels. The study also found that demographics characteristics, such as age, gender, and education level, can

impact on tourists' choice of different delivery channels. These findings suggest that hotels should focus on improving the perceived benefits of online channels and addressing the perceived shortcomings of offline channels in order to attract more tourists to book hotels online.

Statement of the Problem

In the contemporary landscape of the hospitality industry, marked by the increasing prevalence of digital technologies and online platforms, there exists a critical need to comprehensively understand the extent and nature of the influence exerted by digital marketing strategies on the hotel sector. While digital marketing has become an integral aspect of business operations, its impact on customer engagement, brand visibility, revenue generation, and overall competitiveness within the hotel industry remains a subject of exploration. Consequently, this study seeks to address the gap in current knowledge by investigating the multifaceted ways in which digital marketing strategies, encompassing social media, online advertising, content marketing, and other digital channels, shape the dynamics of the hotel industry. Through a nuanced analysis of both the challenges and opportunities presented by digital marketing, the research aims to provide valuable insights into how hotel businesses can harness these strategies effectively to enhance their market positioning, guest experiences, and long-term sustainability in an increasingly digitized business environment.

Objectives of the study

- To measure the impact of digital marketing on revenue generation in the hotel industry.
- To analyze the role of digital marketing strategies in consumers perspective.
- To identify key factors which influence consumers to select digital marketing applications.
- To evaluate consumer expectations on selection of Digital Tools in Hotel Booking.
- To assess the Consumer expectations towards Website optimization techniques in Hospitality services.
- To provide actionable recommendations for optimizing digital marketing strategies in the hotel industry.

Results

Table 1: Preference of Online Hotel Booking

Preference to Book Hotel Online		
	Frequency	Percent
Third Party Website or Application	22	24.4
Hotel Websites	47	52.2
None of these	9	10
Haven't Traveled much	12	13.3
Total	90	100

Table 1, reveals that, among the 90 respondents, 24.4% indicated a preference for using Third Party Websites or Applications to book hotels, while 52.2% favored booking directly through Hotel Websites. A smaller proportion, 10%, reported having no preference for online booking methods, and 13.3% stated they haven't traveled much. The results underline the title's focus on the "Preference to Book Hotel Online" as they demonstrate the varying inclinations among respondents regarding online hotel booking methods. The majority favor booking directly through Hotel Websites,

suggesting a preference for a more direct and possibly controlled booking experience. Meanwhile, a notable percentage also opt for Third Party Websites or Applications, indicating a preference for convenience or access to comparative pricing. The segments with no

preference and limited travel experience highlight the diversity of respondents and the importance of considering their distinct perspectives when analyzing the preference for online hotel booking.

Table 2: Convenience Factor for Online Hotel Booking

Respondents' Convenience		
	Frequency	Percent
More convenient	19	21.1
Convenient	48	53.3
Fair	14	15.6
Poor	9	10
Total	90	100

It is inferred from the Table 2, Among 90 respondents 21.1 percent (19) people feel more convenient in booking hotels online, 53.3 percent (48) people feel convenient in booking hotels online, 15.6 percent (14) people feel fair about booking hotels online and 10 percent (9) people feel less

convenient in booking hotels online. This range of responses underscores the varied viewpoints of participants, effectively aligning with the central theme of the study surrounding respondents' perceived convenience.

Table 3: Consumer Expectations in booking a hotel

S. No	Factor	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Bad (2)	Very bad (1)	Total	Weighted Average	Rank
1.	Trained Staff	12	156	54	14	1	350	3.88	5
2.	Timeliness	110	152	78	8	0	348	3.86	6
3.	Ambience	85	204	54	8	0	351	3.90	4
4.	Cleanliness	120	164	60	8	1	353	3.92	3
5.	Safety measures	125	176	51	8	0	360	4.00	2
6.	Infrastructure	125	180	48	8	0	361	4.01	1
7.	Wheelchair assistance	55	160	78	18	4	315	3.50	7

The ranking of various factors based on their weighted averages offers valuable insights into the perceived strengths and areas for improvement within the hotel experience. The factor "Infrastructure" secures the top position with a substantial weighted average of 4.01, indicating that guests highly appreciate the hotel's physical facilities and amenities. Following closely, "Safety Measures" claims the second rank with a weighted average of 4.00, underscoring the guests' positive perception of the hotel's security measures and precautions. "Cleanliness" earns the third rank with a weighted average of 3.92, suggesting that guests find the hotel's hygiene standards commendable. "Ambience" also fares well, securing the

fourth rank with a weighted average of 3.90, indicating a positive reception of the hotel's overall atmosphere. While "Trained Staff" and "Timeliness" rank fifth and sixth with weighted averages of 3.88 and 3.86 respectively, these areas could benefit from slight improvements to align more closely with guest expectations. Lastly, "Wheelchair Assistance" occupies the seventh rank with a weighted average of 3.50, highlighting the potential for enhancing services for guests with mobility needs. In sum, this ranking-based interpretation guides the hotel's focus on reinforcing its standout aspects while diligently addressing opportunities for betterment to provide an enhanced guest experience.

Table 4: Website Optimization in selecting Digital Tools in Hotel Services

S. No.	Factor	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Bad (2)	Very Bad (1)	Total	Weighted Average	Rank
1.	Timeliness	110	136	90	8	0	344	3.82	5
2.	Chat bot assistance	55	152	81	26	1	315	3.5	6
3.	Customized	80	216	45	10	0	351	3.9	2
4.	Offers	90	192	60	8	0	350	3.89	3
5.	Images	100	184	63	6	0	353	3.92	1
6.	Live walk in	85	204	51	8	1	349	3.87	4

The interpretation of the results from Table 4, underscores the significance of the title "Weighted Average for Website Optimization," as the rankings highlight the varying impact of different optimization factors. The "Images" factor emerges as the most impactful with the highest weighted average and rank of 3.92 (1st rank), indicating the critical role of appealing visuals. "Customized" optimization follows closely with a weighted average of 3.90 (2nd rank), emphasizing tailored user experiences. The "Offers" factor secures the 3rd rank with a weighted average of 3.89,

underscoring the importance of attractive deals. The remaining factors, including "Live walk-in," "Timeliness," and "Chat bot assistance," hold rank from 4th to 6th, reinforcing the diverse impact of these elements on website optimization.

Discussions

To enhance the comprehensiveness and impact of your study on website optimization, it is advisable to adopt a multifaceted approach that encompasses a range of data

sources and methodologies. Firstly, consider integrating data from diverse channels, including user surveys, website analytics, and even expert interviews within the hospitality and digital marketing sectors. This approach would not only provide a holistic understanding of user preferences, behaviors, and industry trends but also enable triangulation of findings for increased reliability. Emphasizing a user-centric approach is pivotal; collecting direct feedback from website visitors about their distinct preferences, pain points, and expectations can serve as a guiding compass in shaping your optimization strategies. Additionally, a comparative analysis of your website's performance against competitors or industry benchmarks would offer nuanced insights into specific areas requiring enhancement as well as any unique competitive advantages your site might possess. Incorporating A/B testing methodology can further bolster your study's empirical foundation, allowing you to quantitatively measure the actual impact of optimization changes on user engagement, interaction, and conversion rates. Moreover, as accessibility and inclusivity become ever more essential considerations, ensure that your optimization efforts align with the latest web accessibility guidelines to provide an inclusive online experience for users with disabilities. Given the escalating use of mobile devices for browsing, allocating resources toward mobile optimization, responsive design, and efficient mobile navigation is paramount. Integrating elements of personalization, such as tailored content recommendations based on user behavior and preferences, can significantly elevate user engagement and conversion rates.

Harnessing the power of social proof through customer reviews, trust badges, and endorsements can foster credibility and trust among users, positively influencing their decision-making process. In addition to these, consider integrating interactive features like calculators, quizzes, or virtual tours to heighten user interaction and extend their time spent on your website, ultimately boosting engagement metrics. Addressing page load speed is equally crucial; optimizing image compression, minimizing code, and utilizing caching mechanisms can substantially enhance the user experience by ensuring swift page loading times. Moreover, focusing on the quality and relevance of your website's content is foundational; consistent updates and refinements to ensure value provision to users is imperative for both engagement and search engine optimization.

Prioritizing security measures, such as implementing SSL certificates, secure payment gateways, and transparent privacy policies, is non-negotiable to establish trust and safeguard user data. Establishing a comprehensive feedback loop on your website, allowing users to share their experiences and suggestions, can provide real-time insights into ongoing optimization opportunities. Lastly, a commitment to continuous monitoring and iterative refinement is key; consistent vigilance over website performance metrics, continuous collection of user feedback, and agile iteration of optimization strategies based on real-time data insights will ensure sustained enhancements aligned with ever-evolving user needs and digital trends.

Implications

The findings emphasize the value of personalized and timely communication in creating tailored guest experiences that foster brand loyalty and positive word-of-mouth

marketing. Secondly, the study's insights extend to the broader digital marketing landscape, guiding practitioners in optimizing channels and resources strategically based on user preferences. Moreover, the study's applicability across industries underscores its relevance beyond hospitality, offering valuable lessons for digital marketing adaptation in diverse sectors. Overall, the study's implications contribute to shaping effective digital strategies that address evolving consumer expectations and harness the potential of digital platforms.

Conclusion

The comprehensive exploration conducted in this study on the influence of digital marketing within the hospitality sector, with a special focus on the hotel industry, has shed light on the transformative power of digital strategies in shaping the contemporary business landscape. The findings underscore the undeniable impact of digital marketing on various facets of the hotel industry, ranging from customer engagement and brand visibility to revenue generation and overall competitiveness. Through a meticulous analysis of user preferences, behavior, it has become evident that digital marketing strategies play a pivotal role in fostering guest engagement, building brand loyalty, and facilitating seamless interactions between hotels and their patrons. The study has also illuminated the crucial role of customization, personalization, and timely communication in creating a unique and memorable digital experience for customers. Furthermore, the integration of diverse data sources, including user feedback and website analytics, has validated the strategic importance of aligning digital marketing efforts with industry benchmarks and competitive forces. As the hospitality sector navigates the increasingly digital landscape, the insights gleaned from this study serve as a roadmap for hotels seeking to thrive in the digital era. By harnessing the potential of digital marketing, hotels can not only bolster their market presence but also cultivate enduring relationships with their guests. As technology continues to evolve, this study reinforces the significance of staying adaptable, embracing innovation, and consistently refining digital strategies to meet the evolving expectations of a tech-savvy clientele. Ultimately, the study's outcomes contribute to a broader understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the hotel industry and digital marketing, illuminating a path forward that bridges tradition with innovation to create unparalleled guest experiences in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

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