

Study of Digital Marketing Effectiveness for Star Category Classified Hotels in India

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to find out digital marketing effectiveness for star category hotels in India which are classified by Hotel and Restaurant Approval & Classification Committee (HRACC), Ministry of Tourism, Government of India (GoI). Extensive literature review are the founding pillars upon which this research-based study has been framed followed by categorising few research papers which have earlier examined related works in India/abroad. Findings of literature reviewed in the paper are that digital marketing is quite effective for 3 star and above category hotels in India. Optimal utilisation is the key factor. This research work is based only out of similar research works of the past and no empirical has been done. The findings of this study may be applicable to the star category or equivalent hotels in India or may be abroad. The outcomes cannot be related to other subsectors of the Hospitality industry or other constituents of wider Travel and tourism sector. The results of this study may surely help the hotel marketers to know the effectiveness of important digital marketing tools for hotels and use them strategically. It would also encourage more scholars and researchers from academia and hospitality industry to go about doing digital marketing studies exclusively for hotels in India. The value of the study is for its contribution to how digital marketing team can effectively optimise digital marketing strategies for Indian hotels. Due to the limited numbers of related papers exclusively written specifically pertaining to digital marketing for Indian hotels, the researchers have tried to examine research works of other researchers across the globe.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Digital Marketing, Indian Hotels & HRACC

Introduction

Defining Hospitality can be best explained by questioning the word itself from leading experts in this domain and there is always a chance when there would be different answers like “Welcoming and receiving the guests in a very generous and cordial manner.” “Creating a pleasant or sustainable environment.” “Satisfying a guest need (mainly with respect to Food & Beverage or

Accommodation or both).” “Anticipating a guest’s desires” and many other such kind of variety in responses (Hotel 2020: Beyond segmentation, <https://amadeus.com/documents/en/hospitality/research-report/hotels-2020>). Hospitality emerged out of the root word ‘hospice’ which in present days can be best described as a nursing home (Chon & Sparrowe, 200), hence and it has a clear relation with hospital. Lately Hospitality includes hotels and restaurants and also encompasses other institutions that offers accommodation or meals or both to any bona fide traveller away from their respective homes (Powers & Barrows (1999). The hospitality industry is a service industry; that means the competent professionals working for

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this industry always extend their support in taking proactive measures for the well-being and care of others as much as they mean for themselves which ultimately results in providing a good enough to Yo-man services to the guest (Sitemind, blog). The quality range or magnitude may vary from one establishment to another simply because the guest satisfaction is dependent on many factors (Social table, blog). In India, hospitality is based on the principle of “*Atithi Devo Bhava*”, meaning "the guest is God" (Taittiriya Upanishad)

The recent digital disruption, surge in Information technology and its easy accessibility to common people have instigated the business world, especially hospitality industry to shift towards digital paradigm (KPMG-FICCI, 2018). The e-connectivity through internet has completely disrupted the way hotel guests or prospects are being engaged with the brand (Sakib, 2014) as a result hotel these days are focussing so much on the ‘Reputation’ management and has also made the traditional marketing arrangements superseded with the emergence of new focal arena, i.e. digital marketing. (Mahendru, 2015)

Digital marketing for the hotels can be described as the promotional practices for mainly showcasing their product offering (which necessarily includes products and services both) with the means of digital distribution channels via smart phones, computers, and related digital devices. The digital marketing has opened new vistas and channels (digital media as an information resource and communication platform) for the hotels, to sell their products offerings. Important digital techniques used for marketing of hotels are Social Media Marketing (SMM), Search Engine Optimization (SEO) (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013); App based Mobile Marketing, web analytics, e-banners, marketing through online pics and videos on different electronic platforms such as e-magazines & newspapers, Landing Page

optimization (LPO), as cited in Bitkulova. P.3(2017); Affiliate marketing (Dara,2016), Search Engine Marketing (SEM) (Parvez, Moyeenudin, Arun, Anandan & Janahan, 2018); E-mail Marketing, Content marketing, Blogs based marketing, (Parvez et al., 2018) Big data, Marketing based automation, Internet of Things (IoT), Wearables, Online PR, Communities, Display, Partnerships and many more because of its dynamic nature filled with innovations and to its no surprise, digital marketing patterns gets changed or upgraded very quickly. The marketers still need to explore more potentials that has not been unrevealed so far in order to optimally utilize digital marketing. (KPMG-FICCI, 2018)

The key characteristics of the Indian travellers are changing dynamically, with greater reliance on digital medium as shown by Exhibit-01

Exhibit-01

Major Characteristics of present days' Indian traveller: Some Interesting tech facts		
1	Online Travel searches	Most travellers go online & 67% use voice searches for their trip-based researches
2	Mobile friendly	71% rely on smartphones for research & booking and 82% now prefers digital boarding passes and electronic-tickets
3	Avid Social media user	87% refer their friends post for videos and photographs as part of their travel research and 83% admit being online & remain in touch throughout their travel
4	Seeks discounts	85% use sites showcasing price comparisons for materialising their deals and even 58% agreed on spending sufficient time for getting best price offers
5	Values online reviews	91% use review-based sites however 52% circumspect their trustworthiness
6	Wants free Wi-Fi	75% select hotel that offers free Wi-Fi

Source: KPMG-FICCI ‘Travel and Hospitality gone digital report (2018)

(Ministry of Tourism, 2020) In India, the Tourism ministry lay down series of guidelines for approval of Hotel Projects at the implementation stage, Classification and Re-classification of operational hotels under different types like 1,2,3,4, & 5-star (with or without alcohol facilities), Heritage hotels, B&B, etc. Only when the hotel gets operational, it is permissible to apply for the star-based classifications to Hotel & Restaurant Approval Classification Committee (HRACC), Ministry of Tourism, GoI. India Brand Equity Foundation (2019), an initiative of Ministry of Commerce & Industry reported that Indian Government has recently been making several efforts to boost investments in hospitality industry.

Research Needs

There is a lack of quality research exclusively for hotels in digital marketing in Indian scenario. It is true that plenty of researches are available on larger Travel and tourism sector on global context. (Nuskiya, 2018); (Hsu & Ting, 2013); (Bitkulova, 2017). Hotels provides a considerable amount of jobs in India and is still going, even during and post COVID 19 scenario, it possesses several unique reasons to bounce back and grow, has a significant contribution towards India's GDP and is characterized by more or less in offering a recession free environment to those who work here, directly or indirectly. Such valid reasons make pressing needs for the researchers to carry this research forward.

Scope of this Study

This study is mainly focused on digital marketing effectiveness for HRACC classified 3-star and above category, up to 5-star category hotels of India. An exploratory study was priorly conducted by the researchers before commencing this study which suggested that majority of 1 and 2 level star hotels and non-classified hotels in India still lack or resists in the full-fledged adoption to willingly accept the

optimum role of digital marketing for their hotels, due to varied reasons, in comparison to 3 star and above, up to 5 star level hotels in India. Therefore, 1 and 2 level star hotels as well as non-classified hotels of India were not considered as part of this study.

Literature Review

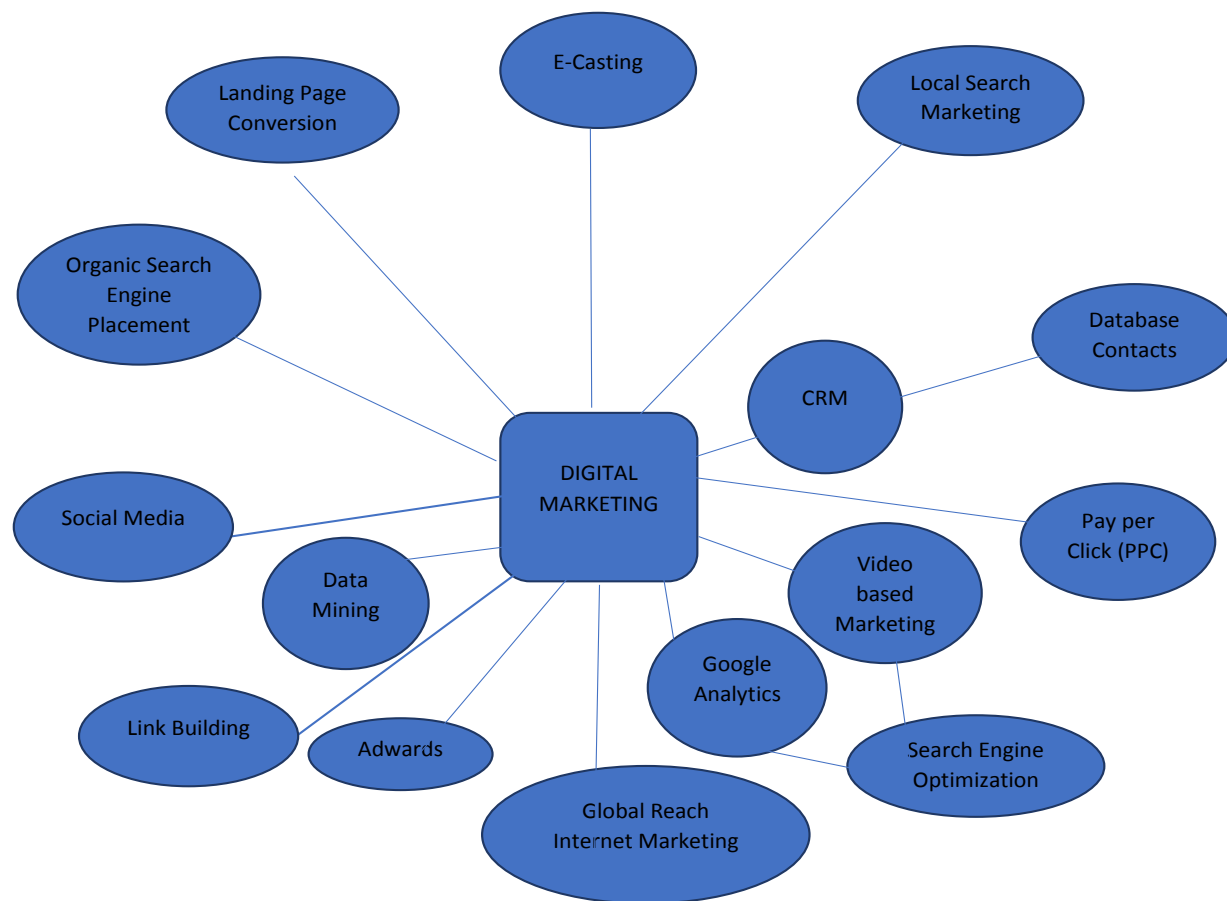
Digital Marketing - An Introduction

Andrews (2020) addressed 'Digital' as the transaction of information and business from screen to screen and further defined 'Digital Tourism' as the digital support and presence provided to travellers before, during and after travel activity. Digital marketing also referred as an integrated perspective on leveraging interactive media for marketing (Parsons, Zeisser & Waitman, 1998) or e-marketing, online marketing or web marketing. It includes wider range of digital and network communication technologies in the pursuit of marketing-based objectives.

Kamble (2019) found that Digital Marketing's annual growth rate in India is around 25-30%, has surpassed 500 million Internet based by 2018-year end.

Ristova & Dimitrov (2019) viewed that now hotels should no longer debate for having a presence at digital platforms but rather focus on how to best utilize these platforms in order to grow in the digitally disrupted world, leading to more delighted experiences of their guests, meeting the value proposition and economical gains.

Exhibit-02 Major Elements (tools) of Digital Marketing for Indian Hotels



Source: Andrews (2020)

Major Digital marketing elements (or tools)

The major elements of digital marketing used by the HRACC classified Indian star category hotels are: social media marketing (SMM), Marketing by mobile based applications and through SMS, MMS, Pay-per-click advertising (PPC) or Search Engine Marketing (SEM) (Parvez, Moyeenudin, Arun, Anandan & Janahan, 2018), E-mail marketing, Website Analytics, Landing Page Optimization (LPO), as cited in Bitkulova, (2017, P. 3), webinars, In links, Google analytics, Blogs/Microblogs, e-newsletters and magazines, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), online video sites (YouTube),

Chat rooms (YM, Blackberry chat) (Khan & Siddiqui, 2013). Dara (2016) viewed about Affiliate marketing as a very popular digital marketing tool nowadays having significant percentage of total contribution from revenue perspective, rakes in very much like e-mail marketing (as cited in Nuskiya, (2018, p. 61) through which a company or an organization rewards affiliates for every visitor or customers they bring through their efforts of marketing. (Parvez et al, 2018) concluded that Property Management System (PMS) is also an active digital marketing medium for hotels which work through customized comprehensive software package that helps not just for the storage and hotel's data sharing but also acts as a connecting link for

digital marketing between the hotels. Online Travel Agents (OTAs) in an overall travel landscape act as a significant and effective marketing and distribution channel and the most significant reason for the hotel joining hands with OTAs is their supportive role in providing sales growth and competition power that leads to revenues growth and improvisation of brand image and customer power. (Caliskan et al, 2013).

Effectiveness of Digital Marketing

Nair & Shobana (2018) suggested marketers to adopt a combination of required Key Performance Indicator (KPI)s and metrics for analyzing their financial and nonfinancial results of their digital marketing efforts for analyzing the effectiveness of digital marketing and thus an accurate digital measurement may act as a brand differentiator for Indian hotels. Yasmin, Tasneem & Fatema (2015) concluded that digital marketing is not a quick fix which requires a lot of trials (and errors) and will succeed only when customer needs are given top priority. For effectiveness of digital marketing the size of company does not play much significant role. The hotel Companies as per their convenience and strengths, may adopt any digital devices like smart mobile phones, tablets, laptops, TVs, game consoles, e-billboards & related gadgets and may also select right digital marketing tools (elements) to gain maximum in their overall business and create innovative customer experiences.

Impact of digital marketing in hotels

In recent times, digital marketing channels represent a significant role in hotel's marketing and communication-based strategies since they observed that their existing guests (customers) and even prospects are increasingly relying on the usage of digital media (Leite and Azevedo, 2017). The performance of hospitality business was found to be significantly affected by digital marketing

(Loncaric & Radetic, 2015) which also leads to a positive image building (Vinnakota, 2017). Companies that were present on digital platforms carried a better brand image (Das, 2016) and reached ultimate profitability (Siakalli et al, 2017) Enabling digital marketing strategies boosted the market growth along with sales (Hsu & Ting, 2013

Growth of Star Category Classified Hotels in India

The process of hotel classification in India was initiated by the government under the chairmanship of M. S. Oberoi in 1956. The classification of hotels and grading system in India acts as a ranking of hotels by using star-based nomenclature, is witnessing a rapid transformation mainly due to a lot of technological innovations such as Internet and emergence of OTA's. The establishment of professional hotels in India dates back to colonial times. Such as Hotel Charles Ville, Mussourie in 1861, Savoy, Mussourie in 1895, Clarkes hotel, Shimla in 1898, Savoy hotel, Shimla in 1902 and Taj hotel, Mumbai in 1903 and so on as cited in (Sufi & Singh, 2016), pg. 2557. The Indian Government established Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) in 1966. Time to time the star category classification norms gets revised by the Ministry of Tourism for its upgradation so that it meets global standards (Devendra, 2001)

Gaps Identified

1. Most of the research papers focused on describing the major elements of digital marketing for hotel/travel and tourism sector, however very few focused on measuring digital marketing effectiveness
2. Most of the researches on digital marketing revolve around bigger canvas of Hospitality industry or Travel and tourism sector in India or even abroad. For the development of the hotel

offerings, growth in their revenue, an exclusive study of digital marketing effectiveness in classified star category hotels of India is very much required

Objectives of this Study

1. To explore the major digital marketing elements (tools) and their effectiveness for HRACC classified star category hotels in India
2. To suggest measures for improvising the digital marketing effectiveness in classified 3 star and above category Indian hotels

Research Methodology

This paper is primarily content analyses of existing literature for investigating factors of digital marketing effectiveness in Indian hotels. The sources for the relevant literature were mainly online Journals, unpublished Masters Report, Websites, Ph.D. (Doctorate) thesis and Conference address.

Findings of literature Review

A summarized finding generated out of extracted literature, primarily from National/International Journals and Reports are as follows:

S. No.	Author, Year	Research Title	Research Methodology	Findings	Journal & indexing
1	2020	Verma, S. Yadav, N "Past, Present, and Future of Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)"	This paper has incorporated performance analysis tools (quantitative and qualitative) and science mapping (or Bibliometric mapping) tools (conceptual and intellectual structures) for review of literature & finding major insights or direction of the future researches	With the digital disruption, people have become 'media' for information sharing with collaboration. e-WOM gives insights of customers (especially those related with service industry)	Journal of Interactive Marketing Vol. 53, February 2021, Pages 111-128 Elsevier: Scopus Indexed
2	2020	Dwivedi, Y.K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D.L, Carlson, J., Filiari, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluo, H. Kefi, H. Krishen, A.S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M.M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P.A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G.A., Wang. Y. "Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions"	Perspective/ Review based study	In this data driven business environment, digital marketing along with social media marketing can build value for organization and positive journey for customers.	International Journal of Information Management. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168

3	(2019)	Ristova, C. & Dimitrov, N <i>“The value of social media as digital tool in hospitality”</i> Vol. 11, No.3,	This study was based out of Secondary data analysis	Efficient usage of social media as digital marketing tool is when customers are turned to social media from start to finish. Social media is undoubtedly one of the powerful tools of digital marketing which is integrated into social and economic life of each individual.	International Journal of Information, Business and Management, Indexed in EBSCO, DOAJ, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, Cabell's Directory, ProQuest
4	(2018)	Pongsatorn Tantrabundit and Ute Jamrozy <i>“Influence of online review and rating system towards consumer preferences in hospitality sector, Vol. 18(4), 84-100.</i>	Quasi-experimental research design was conducted. Data were collected through online survey. A self-administered online questionnaire was used to collect primary data from respondents who have been booking rooms for more than 3 times in the past and were above 19 years of age. Convenience and snowball sampling were used in this study. Total of 243 responses were collected, 174 usable responses were performed in data analysis by using multivariate analysis of variance (MANROVA) and multiple regression analysis.	The negative online review makes powerful impact on the perception, attitude, and purchase intention of hotel’s online consumer than a positive review. Source credibility increases by providing source identity	Journal of Business Diversity Indexing in PROQUEST-Entrepreneurship Studies Source; EBSCO-Entrepreneurship; Google Scholar; Ulrichs Web; The Australian Research Council Index.
5	2018	Savitha Nair and S. Shobana (2018) <i>“Measuring digital marketing performance: Key performance Indicators and Metrics, 5(6)</i>	Conceptual study Secondary data analysis	For complete analysis of digital marketing performance, marketers should select Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and metrics that do possess hotel’s long and short-term objectives as well as those forecasting agreed financial and non-financial implications.	Journal of Management (JOM) Indexing : Google Scholar, Publons, China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) Journal Impact Factor (JIF) EBSCO The Internet Archive J-Gate Universal Impact Factor (UIF) Advanced Science Index Indian Citation Index

6	2018	Shaik Javed Parvez, Moyeenudin H.M., Arun, S, Anandan R Janahan S.K., Digital marketing in hotel industry, 7 (2.21)	50 Questionnaires were distributed to 5-star hotels in Chennai region (from May 2017 to Jan 2018) out of which 40 were complete and used for analysis. For analysis SPSS 21 version and AMOS was used	Effective digital marketing encompasses several benefits such as lower cost, good promotional capabilities, revenue management etc.	<i>International Journal of Engineering & Technology</i> <i>Science Publishing Corporation</i>
7	2017	Gurneet Kaur "The importance of digital marketing in the tourism industry", 5 (1 6):	This study was based out of several literature review and analysis	Effective digital marketing results in tracking data about user behaviour & campaign performance is real time.	International Journal of Research Granthaalayah Indexing : copernicus.com
8	2017	Siakalli, M., Masouras A, and Papademetriou. C. "E-marketing in Hospitality Industry: Foundations and Strategies Vol. 7, Issue 1, Jan - March 2017	This study uses a cross-sectional survey with a representative sample of 3-star hotels and above (Total=30) i.e. 23% 5 star, 50% 4 star and 27% 3star. A random sample of several hotels located in Cyprus was collected. For Data collection, Questionnaire was administered via e-mail and on personal basis. The MANOVA and ANOVA were applied for data analysis	The category of hotel plays a vital role or has a crucial impact on the usability of each e-marketing component. e.g. 5- and 4-star hotel exist in the business environment under common marketing mix components however 3-star hotels have significant differences between luxury class.	International Journal of Management and Business Studies Google Scholar Index copernicus.com J gate DOAJ
9	2017	Leite Rita Abreu and Antonio Azevedo The Role of Digital Marketing: A perspective from Porto Hotels' Managers" Special Number 2 – MDB,	Primary Questionnaire Data collection methodologies (Interviewing, observation, discussions and review of documents) Data were collected in the end of 2016, for: I) Analysis of the online presence in website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Booking.com and TripAdvisor Sample=47 Four star & 12 Five star hotel establishments of Porto, Portugal II) Analysis of the content through Semi-structured interviews conducted with both managers & marketers of the 32 Four & Five star hotels under the sample	For digital marketing effectiveness following points are very important: i) Proper digital marketing training of staffs ii) Video acts as storytelling tool, increases visibility and help in post campaign analysis iii) Linkage of all digital marketing tools where hotel is present iv) Timely evaluation of digital marketing impacts v) Increment of guest engagement mainly on social platforms & vi) Usage of formal language	International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media Publons Google Scholar OAJI.net

10	2017	Vinnakota, Sree Impact of Digital Marketing on Hospitality Business Performance	Explanatory research design was applied in this study. The Sample size were 200 employees from Australia's hospitality sector./ Empirical Research method was used using online survey method. The Positivism research philosophy (Computation and observation) And Deductive research approach was applied here. In the Questionnaire, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used.	The digital marketing results in favorable business performance by building brand image of the hotel, creating maximum customer satisfaction & in generating more reservations.	International Journal of Research, Volume 04 Issue-17 <i>INDEX COPERNICUS JOURNAL</i>
11	2016	Saraswati Arvind Kumar Syed, Asif AliSingh Shamsher, <i>Investigating the dilemmas of online travel agencies in India: An exploratory view</i>	This paper was focused on understanding scope and challenges faced by OTA's. Data for this research paper were taken from documented sources, reputed journals, surveys, corporate websites and media reports.	OTAs provide exposed and wide variety of travel options for travelers. OTA must focus on improving quality, relationship management and maintaining loyal customers.	International Journal of Management Research and Business Strategy Vol.5, No.3, July 2016 <i>INDEX COPERNICUS JOURNAL</i>
12	2016	Sonia Dara " <i>Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies</i> "	Sample=100 firms and 150 executives from 150 firm, who were using digital marketing elements in their system. They were randomly selected. The correlation analysis was applied for analysis.	Digital marketing is most economic and efficient way of marketing. This is applicable for even smaller hotels.	International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary field (ISSN: 2455-0620) Volume - 2, Issue - 12, Dec - 2016
13	2015	Afrina Yasmin Sadia Tasneem Kaniz Fatema <i>"Effectiveness of Digital Marketing in the Challenging Age: An Empirical Study"</i>	Data has been collected from 150 firms & 50 executives using digital marketing, randomly selected to prove the effectiveness of digital marketing. Apart from Correlation analysis, the collected data was analyzed with the help of Coefficient analysis,	Just as "Rome was not built In a single day," The results of digital marketing won't reflect without trial (and error) or without making any attempt, the success factor how well one considers the user or customer's need.	International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration ISSN 1849-5664 (online) ISSN 1849-5419 (print) Volume 1, Issue 5, April 2015, Pages 69-80

14	2015	1Dina Loncaric 2N <i>“The implementation of e-marketing in the hotel industry: The case of Istria County ensi Radetic”</i>	This survey comprised of 43 independent hotels and hotel companies operating in Istria County of Croatia in accordance with the list of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT). Questionnaire were asked to complete via email and was completed by total of 18 hotels or hotel companies Profile of respondents= Top managers 27.8%, Marketing Managers 16.7%, sales Managers 11.1%, ICT experts 5.6% & other positions 33.3%	The hotel companies which apply e-marketing such as maintaining quality websites, regular updating the content, usage of email/social media marketing, on-line booking, mobile apps and adoption of pull mechanism achieves better business performance.	Zbornik Veleučilišta u Rijeci Vol. 3 (2015), No. 1,
15	2015	Mayank Yadav Yatish Joshi Zillur Rahman <i>“Mobile social media: The new hybrid element of digital marketing communications”</i>	Extensive literature review on social media & mobile phone applications was undertaken by the researchers followed by discussion on usage of mobile social media for corporate and marketing communications, sales enhancement and developing cordial relationship with customers. This was an Article based research paper through extensive literature review mechanism	Mobile phones (Especially smart phones) have become part and parcel of customer’s life which bring both opportunities and threat	Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 189 (2015) 335 – 343
16	2013	Semra Caliskan Birgul Kutlu Hande Kimiloglu <i>“The contribution of Online Travel Agencies to the profitability of Hotels: Case of Turkey”</i>	This study was conducted with a sample of 92 hotels in Turkey of various categories including 3, 4 and 5 stars. Survey methodology was used to collect data. 106 valid responses were received from hotels, 92 declared working with OTAs.	Effectiveness in using OTA’s result in: i) Increased Sales ii) Increased revenue iii) Competition power iv) Improved Brand image & v) Customer power	Interdisciplinary Journal of Research in Business (ISSN: 2046-7141) Vol. 3, Issue 03 (pp.08- 18) 2013
17	1999	Parsons, A. Zeisser, M. Waitman, R. <i>“Organizing today for the digital marketing of tomorrow”</i>	Analyses nearly a hundred web sites of Fortune 500 consumer marketing companies on the basis of perspective study	New digital marketing media acts as a big opportunity as well as threat so it must be used very carefully	Journal of Interactive Marketing Wiley Online Library: Vol. 12, Issue 1, Winter 1998

Discussions

Table covers literature over the period of 1999 to 2019. It is evident from these studies that digital marketing has been playing a significant role to improve communication with the customer, creating brand image, connecting with the customer and scaling up the business operations. Studies find that strategy of digital marketing is most economical yet it has its own challenges and needs to be used carefully. In fact hotel industry uses all forms of digital device and platform for business operations, connecting customer and providing quality service. In fact all studies emphasis that digital marketing is an essential strategy for them. Yet, an effective ‘Landing page Optimization’ results in better conversion rate for hotels (Bitkulova, 2017). Small and large hotels have significant differences in the product offerings, prices what they offer, budget they have and type of clientele they generally cater to. Hence, selection of e-marketing tools must be done keeping their star classification and these factors in mind. Therefore, small and large hotels may explore the potentials of digital marketing differently from each other (Siakalli, Masouras & Papademetriou, 2017). Smart phones usability has increased by hotel consumers so hotels must devise their digital marketing tools including apps. Keeping overall user friendliness, quick connectivity and easiness in booking, etc.) (Andrews, 2020). Majority of the Indian hotels and similar hotels internationally consider both local and International OTAs as viable choices to do business. (Saraswati, Syed & Singh, 2016); Caliskan, S., Kutlu, B., & Kimiloglu, H. (2013). Majority of the hotel professionals feel social media as the most effective tool for its penetrating power and economic value it offers. (Sakib, 2014); Leite, R.A. & Azevedo, A. (2017); Das, B. (2016); Nuskiya, A. F. 2018. Negative reviews create a powerful impact on the purchase intention, attitude and perception of online hotel

consumers (Tantrabundit & Jamrozy, 2018) Hotel must ensure positive reviews at maximum numbers with source identity as it creates a credibility in the review. Sufi, T., & Singh, S. (2016). Customer trust fresh and dynamic contents in the digital space as more credible than traditional marketing communications. We must always remember that both traditional and digital marketing channels are significant for customer’s purchase decision and hotels must devise their digital marketing strategy accordingly. (Kaur, 2017); Vinnakota (2017); Dara, S. (2016); Siakalli, Masouras & Papademetriou, 2017).

Recommendations

- i. Top management must focus on digital marketing training for staffs especially those working in the operational department and sales & marketing. E-mail marketing must be strategically adopted at regular time intervals.
- ii. A dedicated staff must be present in hotel (may seek trainee support as well for support functions) for proper guest engagement and providing innovative guest experience on digital environment (mainly social media network)
- iii. The reverts for customer’s query on social media must be provided at the earliest. There must also be a provision for the Inclusion of ratings and comments of guests on multiple platforms. Hotel must carefully track the user’s behaviour
- iv. All digital media tools used by hotels must be integrated. Linking of all digital platforms ensures coherence of communication
- v. App must be user friendly and designed in such a way that the page gets functional within 4 seconds of a click by the customers else they may switch to the competitors’ offerings.

- vi. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat are frequently used social media apps for hotel marketing. Picture, videos, weblinks in messages, etc. must be properly imbibed in all digital channels for better results.
- vii. There must be a proper evaluation of Digital marketing impact every hotel can devise their own methodology for this evaluation. Campaign performance must be tracked at the earliest.
- viii. Hotel websites must be really very attractive, user friendly in approach with relevant, updated in information and in sync with all social media applications.
- ix. Creation of unique content must be emphasized for all digital marketing tools including blogs. The selection of wordings may vary depending on the type of tool.
- x. Customer privacy must be ensured in all digital mediums including the privacy and safeguarding of their data.

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