



Contemporary Social Media Marketing Strategies and Hotel Competitiveness: Evidence from India

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ABSTRACT

The increasing adoption of digital technologies has transformed the marketing landscape of the hospitality industry, making social media marketing an essential strategic instrument for improving customer engagement, brand visibility, and competitive advantage. Hotels increasingly rely on social media channels to interact with potential guests, promote services, build long-term relationships in an increasingly competitive marketplace. The findings reveal that Indian hotels have widely adopted customer-oriented and performance-driven social media marketing strategies. The factor analysis identified two major strategic dimensions. The results indicate that hotels actively utilize social media platforms to strengthen customer relationships, enhance brand awareness, gather customer feedback, expand market reach, implement targeted advertising, and improve revenue generation. Contemporary marketing practices such as influencer collaborations, personalized communication, visual storytelling, and video marketing have become integral components of hotel marketing strategies.

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Introduction

Understanding customer preferences is essential to the success of hotel marketing strategies in the highly competitive hospitality sector. Consumer preference describes the personal preferences and inclinations that influence consumer behavior, especially when it comes to choosing hotel services. Numerous elements influence it, such as price sensitivity, brand perceptions, cultural influences, psychological drivers, demographic traits, and technological engagement. The rapidly expanding middle class, rising internet usage, and changing lifestyles in India have drastically changed consumer expectations, forcing hotel marketers to reconsider their strategies. The experiential aspect of the service has a significant impact on consumer preference in the hospitality industry. Hotel services, in contrast to physical goods, are perishable, variable in delivery, and inseparable from the service provider. Therefore, factors like service quality, cleanliness, staff conduct, room ambiance, safety, and personalization are highly valued by customers (Sulek & Hensley, 2004). These qualities have a big impact on client loyalty and satisfaction. Personalized experiences and cultural awareness have become important differentiators in the Indian market, especially for domestic travellers. Growing suppliers like sharing platforms and rising customer demands for unique experiences are posing a serious threat to the hotel industry. Hotel administrators must thus define their target markets by categorising their clientele into multiple groups in order to customise their service offerings to the needs and expectations of their clientele (Pulido-Fernández & Sánchez-Rivero, 2010). Today Guests frequently use online booking portals like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Make my Trip, Clear Trip and Expedia (to name a few), to find the best hotel before deciding on one. The industry must comprehend guest preference diversity from the viewpoint of marketing in order to successfully adapt and comply to guests' choices (Keane & Wasi, 2013). Additionally, hotel executives must be aware of the particular variations given the range of hotel amenities that different demographic categories favour (Wong & Chi-Yung, 2002). (Kim & Perdue, 2013) state that cognitive (such as brand and pricing), emotional (such as enjoyment and comfort), and sensory (such as environment and room quality) factors have an impact on guests' hotel choice behaviour. Also, using the framework developed by (Kim & Perdue, 2013) three other categories were further identified by (Román & Martín, 2016) for the qualities associated with hotel choice: (1) cognitive (pricing, the quality of food, SPA facilities, and accessibility to beach); (2) affective (safety-security and friendliness of staff); and (3) sensory (noise level and ambience in hotel rooms). It is critical to comprehend how diverse segmentation within and between the business and leisure contexts affect the influence of emotive qualities on hotel choice. Though price plays a crucial role in identifying the choice of hotels but mostly it is based on how well the marketing has been done and identifying the strata to whom the marketing campaign is done for, however according to (Kim et al., 2020) business travelers are more price

sensitive than leisure travelers. Hotels should think about the features that would appeal to their desired clientele while launching new goods and services. The statistical evaluation of social media marketing indicates that customers use goods and services in distinctive, illustrative and indexical ways. According to the audience anticipation while watching all sorts of social media pathways, the audience prefers to look at more online content for certain activities while comparing the variety among competing businesses on another platform before making the final choice. Some noteworthy and intriguing findings from the research include the fact that organizations are more engaged on Facebook and X. Online media community would not follow any hotel if the hotel they do not provide something valuable and appealing on social media. From a marketing standpoint, usage of narratives and storytelling skills, influencer outreach are crucial activities that greatly impact social media users' decisions to make and modify their preferences for the products and services offered by hotels. Hence today the marketing tactics of hotels, cannot disregard social media marketing. Social media platforms provide an excellent means for businesses to target, the potential guests, by posting content related to their brands and also related to the need of the potential guests which will result to their growing user base, appeal, and scale. Companies that tailor their content for social media audiences will succeed (Mukhtar et al., 2022). Customer reviews are a significant part of the global internet hotel industry since they offer insight into what guests think about the features of the hotels' goods and services. The purpose of using online reviews is to gain insights into the level of satisfaction of visitors and their preferences for hotels to improve the marketing strategy and decision-making process (Ahani et al., 2019).

Literature Review

(Giannoukou et al., 2024) explored hotels that are transforming how they do strategic marketing through digital channels. They pinpoint the evolution from advertising to digital, social advertising and urge makers to shift to content that resonates with rest customers online and that affects their purchasing choices. It highlights the importance of integrated digital environments, where website content, app applications and social profiles are linked with targeted advertising, providing a streamlined and convenient customer experience. The authors reviewed a measure of how data-driven information can help hotels identify and correct identified pain points like connectivity issues via proactiveness. Also, it has been touched upon that the need to embrace agile marketing models that have a rapid response to the new trends and consumer behavior.

The applied approaches by (Nalluri et al., 2023) involved conducting a mixed method-based survey of the 64 B&B operators and 625 customers in Taiwan, separating analytical methods, such as Decision Tree and

Information Gain, to pinpoint important factors influencing client loyalty and satisfaction. They have uncovered that “featured choice” – customisable social media interaction options – is the most motivating marketing factor to B&B operators while “beacons and polls” are the motivating engagement tools for customers. Whether it is viewed from a service provider or a user, the most important service quality characteristic that is linked to both satisfaction and loyalty is “assurance” in service delivery. Repeat visits (loyalty): The study emphasizes novelty and event promotions, as well as ensuring guest trust. This work proposes a new feature-selection approach (Information Gain + Decision Tree) using quantitative information to enrich the literature. The current work proposes an enhancement for the omission of information by adding a new feature-selection approach with quantitative information (Information Gain + Decision Tree) for the area of social media towards factor analysis.

(Raab et al., 2016) asked 575 participants to answer a series of questions about the factors that affect consumer attitudes and hotel loyalty program membership including the quality of information and communication style of the hotel's social media. The results from their research suggest that social communication that is more “friendly” overcomes more interactive or “professional” communication to produce greater word of mouth engagement and loyalty. Consumers' social media habits also extend with high-quality information and affect their loyalty to hotel reward programs. The positive relationship between communication style and information quality makes them more likely to seek and post information online and to achieve higher loyalty; this is confirmed using structural modelling. The study highlights the importance of using a friendly, personalized approach to social media interactions and ensuring continuity of accurate and relevant material while interacting with customers. Moreover, managers should be active and involved in peer-to-peer discussions and feedback forums to facilitate user discussion and ensure that accurate program benefits are reinforced.

The study of (Dávila Espuela et al., 2023) collected literature systematically to explore the impact of brands on customer loyalty as they post on social media, by analyzing literature from 1994 to the present day. They took the Oliver & Dick & Basu's “Four-Stage Loyalty Model” and extended it to add important features of social media content. Four important content attributes of relevance, incentive-based campaigns, popularity through friend sharing and high-quality visuals have been found to be key elements in driving loyalty building on social channels. ‘Relevant content’ suggests useful value-added to their fans and followers, whereas campaigns providing real-life rewards and incentives promote engagement and participation. Interactivity and friend recommending any content can also enhance viral social proof, which adds to reach and trust within followers; as can rich and high-quality visuals that increase the amount of user attention and emotional engagement within these audiences. The study shows that all these aspects could be incorporated

into a harmonized loyalty-stage model and that an appropriate social media strategy to publish this content can build trust, make recommendations, lead to repeat purchases and fostering customer loyalty in the long-term.

(Burton et al., 2024) compared the social media activation of Canadian sponsors for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic and Paralympic Games on Twitter and Instagram sites and revealed that there was significantly less attention given to the Paralympic sponsorship. Sponsor posts on the Paralympics were less common and sporadic, and generally focused on congratulatory statements, rather than strategic and engaging content. Paralympic related tweets had a higher number of likes per post, though not as many as Olympic posts, on Twitter, while there were fewer likes in total on the posts, but the overall number of shares was more. The results clearly show a distinction between the two events in terms of strategic orientation and investment in sponsors.

The study aims to understand the relationship between restaurant social media marketing activities (SMMAs) and user engagement and their self-brand connection, as (Ibrahim & Aljarah, 2024), conducted a survey on 298 young Instagram users (aged 18-24). They discovered that consumer engagement in the comments section (likes, comments, shares) and emotional connection with the brand were found to be significantly increased with SMMAs. Furthermore, user engagement is found to be the key in between the two variables of SMMAs and the self-brand connection in this relationship. Gender and trust were shown to moderate these effects-meaning that these relationships vary depending on users' demographics and levels of brand trust. The study highlights the importance of customizing an Instagram SMMAs according to audience demographics, which can significantly boost engagement and brand connections.

(Wang et al., 2024) analyzed that the short-term diffusion, measured by social media mentions and engagement, is influenced by the timing and content of the campaign, whereas the long-term brand formation relies on long-term storytelling and community co-creation. The successful interpretation of algorithm used by influencers, user-generated content and interactive stories to boost global awareness. However, other less-famous sites failed to do well because they were short on resources, lacked a linear storyline, and had less effective stakeholder engagement. The study emphasizes that quantitative data that is balanced with qualitative stories is needed to ensure the growth of brands.

Objectives of the study

- To identify and examine the contemporary social media marketing strategies adopted by Indian hotels.

- To provide strategic recommendations for improving the performance of social media marketing in the Indian hotel industry.

Research Methodology

In order to investigate the modern social media marketing tactics used by Indian hotels and their impact on hotel competitiveness, the current study used a quantitative research approach. A descriptive and analytical research approach was employed to achieve the research objectives. A structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) was used to gather primary data. The questionnaire comprised statements related to various dimensions of contemporary hotel competitiveness and social media marketing tactics.

Data Collection

The target population consisted of sales and marketing professionals working in hotels located in the Delhi-NCR region, as these individuals are directly involved in planning and implementing social media marketing activities. Because the study was exploratory and respondents were easily accessed, a convenience sample strategy was used to collect data. A total of 338 valid responses were obtained and used for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, tabulated, and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The reliability of the measurement scale was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency. Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to identify the underlying dimensions of contemporary social media marketing strategies. The research work was to identify the Social Media Marketing strategies of Indian Hotels. To categorize the Social Media marketing strategies done by the employees of various star category hotels, the selected 28 practices were subjected to exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation.

Reliability of Data

Cronbach's Alpha was employed to evaluate the extent to which the items included in the questionnaire were closely related and consistently measured the underlying construct. According to (D George, 2003) and (Nunnally, 1978) a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally regarded as indicative of good reliability. Furthermore, (Hulin, C. L., Netemeyer, R. G., & Cudeck, 2001) suggested that an alpha coefficient exceeding 0.60 may be considered acceptable for research purposes. As presented in Exhibit 1,

the scale achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.965, demonstrating an excellent level of internal consistency and confirming the reliability of the instrument for subsequent analysis.

Exhibit 1: Reliability Analysis	
No. of Items	28
Cronbach's Alpha	0.965

Measuring Sampling Adequacy of Data

Following the assessment of internal consistency, the next step was to evaluate the suitability of the data for factor analysis. According to (Kaiser & Rice, 1974) a KMO value greater than 0.60 indicates that the data are appropriate for factor analysis. Similarly, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity should yield a significance value of less than 0.05 to confirm that the correlation matrix is suitable for factor extraction (JF Hair, WC Black, 2010; Pallant, 2009). The results of these tests are presented in Exhibit 2. A higher KMO value indicates a strong degree of correlation among the variables, suggesting that they share common underlying factors. Conversely, a lower KMO value implies weak intercorrelations among the variables, making factor analysis less appropriate. As shown in Exhibit 2, the KMO value was found to be 0.972, indicating a high level of sampling adequacy and confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis.

Exhibit 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Test		Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.972
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6108.399
	Degree of Freedom (df)	378
	Significance (Sig.)	<.001

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity examines whether the observed correlation matrix significantly differs from an identity matrix, in which variables are uncorrelated and factor analysis would be inappropriate. The significance value obtained was 0.000 ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that meaningful relationships exist among the variables (D George, 2003). Therefore, the results of both the KMO measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity confirm that the data are adequately correlated, approximately multivariate normal, and appropriate for conducting factor analysis.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to identify groups of interrelated variables and combine them into a smaller number of underlying factors. It helps researchers reduce data complexity by summarizing a

large set of variables into meaningful dimensions while retaining most of the original information. According to (Raven, 1990), factor analysis is a widely applied multivariate technique in hospitality research, primarily used for data reduction and summarization. The technique has also been extensively employed in studies examining social media marketing strategies, enabling researchers to uncover underlying constructs and simplify data interpretation (E. S. Chan, 2014; Leung et al., 2017). The primary objective of factor analysis is to condense the information contained in a large number of variables into a smaller set of meaningful factors (Malhotra, K. N. & Dash, 2011). The extraction of factors was guided by criteria such as Eigenvalues and the percentage of variance explained.

Exhibit 4 Initial Eigenvalues and Percentage of Variance Explained

Component (Factor)	Initial Eigenvalues	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings (% of Variance)	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings (Cumulative %)
1	14.526	33.178	33.178
2	1.063	22.501	55.678
Extraction method: Principal Component Matrix			

Exhibit 5 presents the Rotated Component Matrix, which illustrates the factor loadings of each variable on the extracted factors. The matrix facilitates the identification of variables that exhibit strong associations with a particular factor while maintaining relatively low loadings on other factors. This helps in achieving a clearer and more interpretable factor structure. According to (JF Hair, WC Black, 2010; Nunnally, 1978), variables with factor loadings of 0.50 or higher are generally considered significant and are therefore retained for further analysis. Accordingly, the variables loading above the prescribed threshold were used to interpret and label the extracted factors. After the extraction of the 2 factors the identification and naming of the factors is done according to the items associated in the factor.

Factor 1: Customer Engagement, Brand Development and Market Reach

The first factor constitutes questions related to Customer Engagement, Brand Development and Market Reach. This factor accounts for 33.178 % of variance and Eigen value 14.526. This factor has items like Global reach, customer feedback, brand awareness, customer engagement, loyalty, influencer marketing, targeted advertising, customer acquisition. The high variance and Eigen value shows that for hotel employees the variables related to the Customer Engagement, Brand Development and Market Reach means a lot.

Factor 2: Cost Effectiveness and Revenue-Oriented Social Media Strategies

With Eigen value 1.063 and 22.501 percent of variance, the second factor contains items and based on its constituent items it is named as Cost Effectiveness and Revenue-Oriented Social Media Strategies. This factor included items such as Cost reduction, advertising efficiency, repeat reservations, geo-targeting, local partnerships, promotional efficiency etc. These two factors together explain 55.678% of the total variance, indicating a satisfactory representation of the strategic role of social media marketing in hotels.

Exhibit 5 Rotated Component Matrix

	Component	
	1	2
Marketing online expands our global reach	0.779	
Social media helps gather customer feedback	0.766	
Instagram and Facebook showcase hotel offerings	0.765	
Social media helps target new segments	0.680	
Customer reviews enhance our brand image	0.680	
Social media outperforms traditional marketing audience reach	0.673	
Social media marketing boosts our brand awareness	0.669	
Social media influencers open business doors	0.653	
Social media enables innovative hotel marketing approaches	0.647	
Regular social media interaction improved hotels guest loyalty	0.644	
Videos (on YouTube, Instagram Reels) significantly boost customer acquisition	0.631	
Social media helps us to engage with customers in real-time	0.615	
We promote hotels through influencer partnerships	0.597	
Social media enables highly targeted advertising	0.579	
Social platforms help attract event tourists	0.577	
Marketing online increases direct hotel reservations	0.564	
Social media highlights our unique amenities	0.560	
Social media platforms help us engage valued customers	0.550	
Platforms allow group-specific promotional offers	0.528	
Social media campaigns help reduce marketing costs		0.734

Social media ads deliver higher cost efficiency		0.684
Offers on platforms raise repeat reservations		0.680
Social media enables local business partnerships		0.633
Geo-targeting draws guests from specific areas		0.597
We try innovative campaigns via social media		0.595
Social media lowers hotel promotion costs		0.580
Social media content resonates with audiences		0.547
Targeted ads on platforms increase bookings		0.515
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to investigate the social media marketing strategies of the hotels in India today. For this purpose, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to investigate the dimensions of the variables related to the strategy, which led to the identification of two underlying dimensions: Customer Engagement, Brand Development and Market Reach and Cost Effectiveness and Revenue-oriented Social Media Strategies. All these factors together accounted for a significant amount of the variance, meaning that they are able to capture the major strategic approaches undertaken by hotels in their social media marketing.

The results indicate that the use of social media in the hospitality industry in India is gaining momentum and being seen as a means of improving customer interaction, brand perception, and market penetration. Hotels are proactively using social media platforms as a communication tool to engage with customers in real time, collect customer feedback, foster customer loyalty, market hotel products and services, encourage new customer segments and build brand awareness. The massive influence of the influencers, targeted marketing, promotional campaigns and visual content once again highlights the importance of customer-focused and relationship-based marketing strategies. The hotel can use these practices to build better relationships with current and future guests and build more visibility in the market. Social media was also identified as a low-cost marketing solution. Hotels use social media to save on promotional spending, enhance advertising performance, secure repeat business, build local business relationships and launch geo-targeted marketing campaigns. Social media marketing provides more flexibility, reach and targeting options than traditional marketing methods, making it a more effective way for hotels to accomplish their

marketing goals. Revenues are being driven by its use of social media, with customized offers, targeted ads and performance-driven campaigns now being adopted—clearly demonstrating that hotels are using social media not just to maintain an online presence, but to achieve measurable business results.

The results indicate that Indian hotels have gone beyond the point of using social media platforms and are embracing more advanced and integrated digital marketing tactics. These elements highlight a customer-centric and brand-building strategy for social media marketing, aligning with modern trends in hospitality marketing. In addition to communicating with customers via social media, hotels are also using social media to gain competitive advantage, position themselves in the market, and optimize their performance. The results show that the present social media marketing practices of the Indian hotels are mainly focused on two main aspects: promotion of customer engagement and brand development and cost efficiency and revenue growth. Hotel marketing strategies have become a vital part of the hotel marketing mix and contribute significantly to the hotel's business development, customer relations management and competitiveness in the long term. Thus, the second aim of the study was accomplished.

Suggestions & Recommendations

Human Resource and Training Recommendations: Implement regular training sessions and workshops to improve employees' social media marketing, analytics, and content creation skills. Hotels need to train and educate their employees in data analysis and digital marketing tools so that they cannot rely on external agencies anymore. Specialized Digital Marketers should be recruited, particularly in mid and large hotel properties.

Financial and Resource Recommendations: Ensure that hotels have a budget set aside for social media marketing, such as paid social media ads, content development, and subscriptions to social media tools. It is important to focus on cost-effective strategies like organic marketing, influencers, and user-generated content (UGC) to maximize ROI.

Customer Relationship and Personalization Recommendations: Hotels can utilize platforms such as WhatsApp and chatbots to engage with their customers in real-time and communicate with them in a personalized manner. Social media should be connected with loyalty programs and CRM systems, to enhance guest retention and return bookings. Prompt and professional handling of customer feedback and complaints should be ensured to maintain a positive brand image.

Technological Recommendations: The use of AI tools for content creation, sentiment analysis, and customer insights can improve marketing effectiveness. Advanced monitoring tools must be used to monitor brand

mentions, competitor activities, and market trends and should be a major hotel investment. Social media platform integration with booking engines can be beneficial to help drive engagement to direct bookings.

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