

ANALYZING THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR HERITAGE HOTELS OF INDIA

Ms. Rani Sharma, Research Scholar, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur
Dr. Kavaldeep Dixit, Professor & Vice-Principal, International School of Informatics & Management, Jaipur
Ms. Omisha Dixit, B.Tech (ECE), Birla Institute of Technology, Mesra

Abstract

The internet's expansion has constantly supported social media in society from the late 1990s and early 2000s. Several hundred million active users utilize various social media platforms, dedicating time to communicating and finding information within the cyber community. For both hoteliers and visitors, the advent of social media has offered up new opportunities. It has increased marketing efforts for hotels. It has also aided travelers in getting insight into the area and arranging their stay.

Such prevalence and linkage between these two variables, i.e., social media and travelers, proposes the study in the field of heritage hotels and social media. For this purpose, the data was collected from the Indian travelers with a functional sample size of 571. To test the hypothesis, the structural equation model was used and Chi-square test was used to determine the model's fit. To conclude, the present research paper proposes the analysis of social media to understand the traveler's behaviors and suggest the marketing tactics to heritage hotels.

Keywords: Social Media, Online Engagement, Hospitality, Heritage Hotels.

Introduction and Review of Literature

Any traveler while surfing through the social media sites gets across with many photos and videos having beautiful locations and exotic scenes which arose the desire of being there and intends them to look into the details of the location. As soon as the location gets final and the traveling plan comes into the picture there comes the need of booking the hotel and resorts for stay. From here the search for hotels and resorts starts and social media plays its role. Hence, to continue social media in today's times hasn't spared any sector and hotels are no exception to it. Hotels have already adopted a new and innovative way to showcase themselves through social media. It is emerging as an important tool for travelers by helping them to see new locations, engage directly with a hotel, enhancing their satisfaction and building trust. Social media also entice travelers by offering extending market deals, giving them passive incentives to like, share and comment. Besides this, the use of influencer marketing and blogger engagements has also been impactful. The use of social media is rising day by day in the hotel industry and it's creating more loyalty, attaching new customers and enhancing visibility. Various platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter have been effectively employed for marketing of services by the hospitality industry. Social media platforms facilitate online functionality and monitoring perspectives allowing hotel operators to improvise their services and meet customer's expectation.

(Verma, M. and Verma, K. 2018), in their research paper titled "Social Media a Promotional Tool: Hotel Industry" explore the role of social media by hotels as well as customer opinions on the use and advantages of social media. Hotels that utilize social media to attract new clients, hold existing clients, and upgrade their online presence are beginning to experience positive benefits. The primary motivation for hotels to engage in social media marketing is to improve their image and promote their properties. Social media channels help hotels in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and in learning more about customer preferences and behavior. According to the authors, social media cannot directly assist in sales, but it can assist in brand awareness and exposure to outside people, resulting in positive long-term results.

(Lee, W., and Chhabra, D. 2015), in their study "Heritage hotels and historic lodging: Perspectives on

experiential marketing and sustainable culture” offer vital and remaking techniques for the sustainable use of historical accommodations. Heritage sustainable tourism, according to the authors, offers host communities with genuine economic benefits while also fostering communal and cultural participation with community welfare. Heritage hotels become a broad field of research.

The influence of social media engagement by hotels on prospective booking and income generation is investigated by (Healy, T. G., and Wilson, A. 2015). The authors achieve this by first examining top hotel executives' perceptions on the return on investment (ROI) by social media activity, then mining hotel booking data for determining the scope of social media involvement by visitor with a hotel before & after a reservation is done, and finally experimenting with advertising via social media to determine its effect on hotel guest booking and income creation. According to the research, social media engagement and advertising have a positive impact on hotel reservations and revenue generation. Social media participation also improves customer service and brand awareness, however it is unclear if it influences purchase behavior. According to researchers, when followers are picked-out with promotional offers over social media, they are more likely to buy, share, and interact.

(Shirase, R. 2014), finds in his article "The Effect of Social Networking Sites on Hotel Sector in Pune Region," that the hotel industry may advertise itself on social networking sites by engaging consumers and clients in discussion and then recognising their requirements. The hotel sector may connect with customers on social media before, during, and after their visit. SNS establishes a genuine connection between businesses and their consumers, sparking a purchase-intensity trend and providing a platform for innovative advertising to be employed successfully for the hotel industry's growth. With the usage of online social platforms, the hotels may achieve competitive edge by lowering advertising costs, increasing awareness, capturing a larger market, transacting worldwide, improving customer service quality, and acquiring new consumers.

The article "An Empirical Study on Use of Social Media in the Hotel Industry in China: A Study of Customers' Preferences and Attitudes" by (Wang, R. and Chen, T. 2014) focused on the choice and view point of Chinese passengers, as well as the association between social media utilization (based on WeChat and SinaWeibo) and hotel options in the industry. The study's findings show that associated hotels and network ticketing companies favor to utilize social media to captivate visitors and likely customers. The highest three factors influencing hotel selection being pricing (71.84 percent), location (68.16 percent), and online rating (33.06 percent).

(Enyioko, N. C. and Nwokah, N. G. 2018), examined the impact of social network marketing on organizational efficiency and highlighted that enhancing brand image and creating awareness were the two important objectives accomplished by it. The authors further concluded that strategic use of Facebook, Twitter and blog significantly impacted organizational effectiveness.

(Momany and Alshboul, 2016) further highlighted the strategic relevance of social media marketing for hotels in creating additional promotional opportunities and generating brand awareness among customers. (Tom Dieck, Jung and Moorhouse 2018), had described the usage of social networking sites in luxury hotels and ended up concluding that the social networking sites have emerged as a prominent marketing tool in business promotion resulting in wider reach and expansion. They further elaborated that Facebook and Snapchat among social media platforms have emerged as an important source of communication for helping customers from varied geographical zones of the world to stay connected. As per a study by (Mangold & Faulds 2009) marketing through social media allows companies to communicate with their prospects and also facilitates flow of information among the customer themselves as well.

Heritage Hotel Selection and Social Media Potency: Its Direct Effect

As a result of social media, satisfaction in context of travelling has increased. Travelers mostly share positive

information about themselves on social media. This positive information is frequently followed by an honest answer, which further strengthens the positive feedback. As a result, the level of confidence rises. Furthermore, positive information posted on social media also leads to increase in traveler's confidence and morale, which results in impromptu booking and decision-making. The decision to book heritage hotels appears to eliminate the coherent behavior of travelers'. Increasing self-esteem and flaunting privilege among others are all the common factors that contribute to fast decisions.

In fact, heritage hotels demonstrate lavish and royal spending which symbolizes travelers' prestige. Booking a stay at a heritage hotel is more of a exhibiting. Furthermore, it has been hypothesized that increased use of social networking sites leads to a positive impact on booking of a heritage hotel. Believing this, the hypothesis of the study is framed as –

H₁: The increased usage of social media has a favorable impact on the booking of a heritage hotel.

Methodology

To test the hypothesis, the study collected a sample from Indian travelers. Travelers who had at least stayed once in any of the heritage hotel of India were considered under study. For data collection purposive sampling was used with a functional sample size of 571. Data was collected through online Google forms over a period of six months. For testing the hypothesis, the structural equation model was used and Chi-square test was used to check the model's fit. Squared multiple correlations and correlations among variables were evaluated to assess the reliability and validity of research variables and items.

Variables, Data Analysis and Assessment

For the study, two main variables were considered which included Social Media Potency and Booking of Heritage Hotel. Both the variables have been analyzed with the help of six-point Likert scale as highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1: Representing the Research Constructs and Variables

Constructs	Question	Variables	Source
Social media Potency (SMP)	Rate your intensity of using the following social media channels? (Where 1 is "Not At All Active" and 6 being "Very Active")	SMP 1: Social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Instagram) SMP 2: Micro-blogging sites (e.g. Twitter) SMP 3: Online photo-sharing platforms (e.g. Instagram, and Pinterest) SMP 4: Sited for video sharing (e.g. YouTube)	Adapted from Gilbert and Bush (2002) and Ellison, et al. (Gonzales, A. L., & Hancock, J. T., 2011)
Booking of Heritage Hotel(BHH)	Prior to booking the heritage hotel for a stay what factors were considered? (Where 1 being "Strongly Disagree" and 6 being "Strongly Agree")	BHH 1: It's important to know what my colleague thinks of a heritage hotel I'm considering to book. BHH 2: It's important to know which kind of individuals are booking the heritage hotel I'm thinking about. BHH 3: Knowing what other people think of individuals who book certain heritage hotels, as I do, is important. BHH 4: Knowing which heritage hotel to book is crucial for making a good first impression.	The scale is developed based on the concept derived from Chung and Fisher (2001).

To gauge the reliability and validity of research variables and items, squared multiple correlations and correlations among the variables were calculated. Analysis and calculation unfold the considerable interconnection between the variables. The following data, supplement the validity of the research variables-

- Mostly, the Correlation among the variables is higher than 0.70.
- Most of the research variable has r^2 higher than 0.60.
- In addition, variables are also valid. As the factor loadings of the research variables range from 0.69 to 0.91.

To analyze and inspect the reliability of constructs, variables, and scales, composite reliability (cr) and Cronbach's Alpha (α) were used. Cronbach's Alpha (α) and Composite reliability (cr) are both more than 0.70, indicating that the study variables and construct are trustworthy and valid.

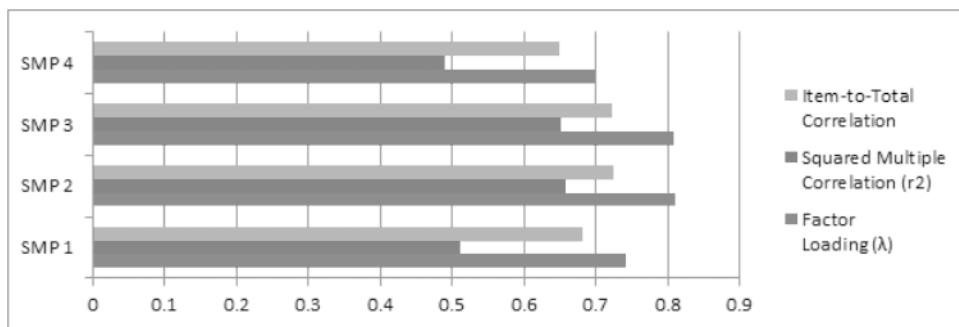


Figure 1: Delineating the Analysis of Social Media Potency (SMP)

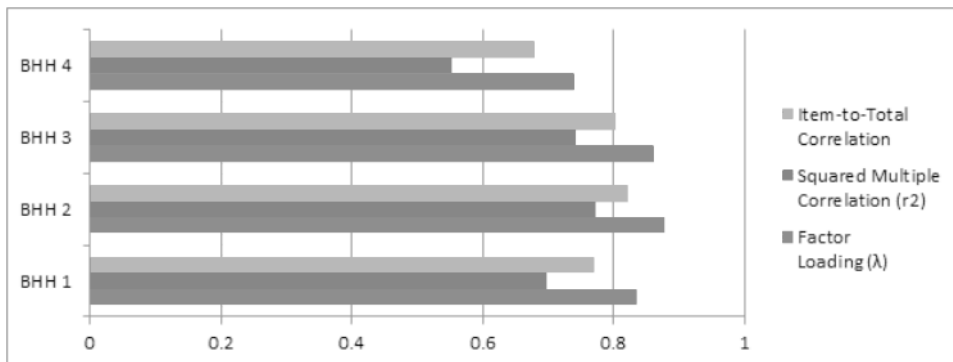


Figure 2: Delineating the Analysis of Booking of Heritage Hotel (BHH)

Table 2. Delineating the analysis of reliability and validity of research constructs

Construct	Composite Reliability (cr)	Cronbach's Alpha (á)	Average Variance Extracted (ave)	Standard Error (se)	SMP	BHH
					Square root of the average variance extracted (ave)	
Social media Potency (SMP)	.721	.853	.393	.029	.627	
Booking of Heritage Hotel(BHH)	.823	.897	.539	.028		.734

Table 2, shows the data analysis in regards to reliability and validity of research constructs. It is followed in accordance to usual approach provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990). The square roots of average variance retrieved for all constructs were then determined. It was also discovered to be larger than the relevant correlation with other constructs, indicating that it was sufficient. Furthermore, each construct demonstrates viability because the correlation is smaller than 1 when the standard errors are taken into account. Since the study's constructs and variables have been proved to be trustworthy, valid, and suitable, the research has progressed to the next stage of testing the hypothesis.

Findings and Discussion

The structural equation model was employed to test the hypothesis. The model fit was tested using the Chi-square test, as proposed by Yi and Bagozzi (2012). The model's X^2 is 354.17(d.f. =71), which is significant at p.01. However, the literature on the structural equation model suggests that chi-square should not have been used alone to assess model fit. Sample size sensitivity is the explanation behind this. Given the study's enormous sample size, seeing much colossal X^2 becomes impossible. As a result, other important indices such as TLI (NNFI), RMSEA, and CFI, with values of 0.972, 0.58, and 0.978, have been considered (R. P., Bagozzi& Yi, Y., 2012). The structural model bestows an appropriate and a good fit for the data, as the TLI and CFI are higher than 0.97 and RMSEA is lesser than 0.60. The data analysis expresses powerful results and supplements both the hypothesis. **Figure 3** depicts positive structural coefficients with a significant $p < .01$ and having the relative standard errors indicated in parentheses. The potency and increase use of social media positively and significantly impact the booking of heritage hotels having $\beta = .384$ and $p < .01$). Thus, the data validates H_1 .

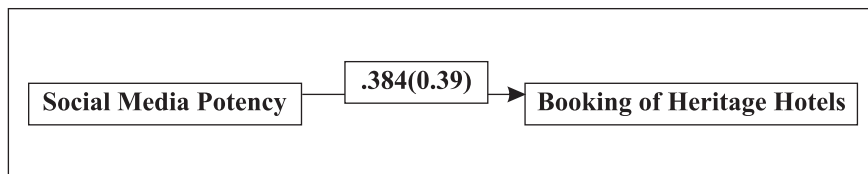


Figure 3: Structural Coefficients of Hypothesis

Table 3: Delineating the direct, indirect and comprehensive impact (Standardized Structural Coefficients)

	SMP ~ BHH
Direct Impact	.301
Indirect Impact	.196
Comprehensive Impact	.497

Table 3 shows the values of structural coefficients, and the data analysis depicts the direct impact, indirect impact and comprehensive impact of social media potency on booking of heritage hotels. Direct impact of social media on booking of heritage hotels is found to be .301 and its indirect impact is .196. Taking about social media compressive impact on booking of heritage hotel, it is found to be .497. Agreeing to divination, the results of the study factually prove that the potency of social media is so powerful that it impacts and influences the booking of a heritage hotel. Research also stipulates that increased active involvement on social media by travelers leads to an increased chance of booking heritage hotels by stimulating the sense of prestige.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The research paper has explicitly scrutinized and has examined the phenomenon of social media impact on decision-making of travelers while booking heritage hotels in India. For this purpose, rigorous and empirical analysis of data in regards to the two research constructs of the study; social media use and potency and booking of heritage hotels has been carried out. The results of data analysis conclude that social media networking has affected traveler's choices tremendously. India is a country that offers an exemplary depiction of developing economies and its travelers have latterly escalated the usage of the internet and social media networking. This growth and advancement give a wide scope to heritage hotels for implementing marketing strategies to attract travelers. The research paper authenticates and elongates both the literature on social media networking and the behavior of travelers by studying how social media has impacted the decision-making of travelers. Thus, it also supplements the academic contribution. Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and other social media network channels offer travelers to post and present their views and opinion. And often, to exhibit their prestige among their friends, travelers render and showcase the luxury and positive details. The replies on the post by community members and friends lead to the enhancement of positive information, which thus usher the prestige and self-esteem leading to the constructive advantage of social media. In comparison to the distant know members, the close members in the social media network are also proven crucial in the decision of booking of a heritage hotel. Posting the positive information makes other travelers actively involved and makes them rely on the information. Based on which they make the booking decision. As a result, the study supports the usage of social network strategy.

The findings of the data analysis show both primary and secondary effects of a social media site on heritage hotel bookings, which help hoteliers build modern and digital marketing strategies.

Future Research

The further study may be elucidated in researching other relevant factors such as the expectation of travelers in booking the heritage hotels, the propensity to over-spending and over-utilization of credit and the researches focusing on the deeper insight of traveler's practices in cyber & virtual environment. Besides this, comparative studies of various models from different studies in national and international contexts can also pave a way for further development of advanced theories.

References

- Bagozzi, R. P. &Warshaw, P. R. (1990). Trying to consume. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(2), 127-140.
- Bagozzi, R. P. & Yi, Y. (2012). Specification, evaluation, and interpretation of structural equation models. *Academy of Marketing Science*.40(1), 8-34.
- Bush, V. D. &Glibert. F. W. (2002). The web as medium: An explanatory comparison of Internet users versus newspaper readers. *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, 10 (14), 1-10.
- Chung, E. & Fischer, E. (2001). When conspicuous consumption becomes inconspicuous: The case of the migrant Hong Kong consumers. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 18 (6), 474–488.

- Enyioko, N. C. and Nwokah, N. G. (2018), Social Media Marketing and Organisational Efficiency of Deposit Money Banks in Nigeria, *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, Volume 11, Issue 3, 512-517.
- Fornell, C. & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 18(1), 39-50.
- Gonzales, A. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of Facebook exposure on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. 14(1), 79-83.
- Healy, T. G., & Wilson, A. (2015). Social Media Marketing in the Hospitality Industry: Is It Worth The Effort?
- Lee, W., & Chhabra, D. (2015). Heritage hotels and historic lodging: Perspectives on experiential marketing and sustainable culture. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 10(2), 103–110.
- Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: the new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357-365.
- Momany, Muaid; Alshboul, Abdullah, *International Journal of Business, Marketing, & Decision Science* . Fall 2016, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p33-54. 22p. 7
- Shirase, R. (2014). The Effect of Social Networking sites On Hotel Industry in Pune Region. *IJSRD - International Journal for Scientific Research & Development*, 1(11), 2322–2327.
- Tom Dieck, D., Tom Dieck, M. C., Jung, T., & Moorhouse, N. (2018b). Tourists' virtual reality adoption: An exploratory study from Lake District National Park. *Leisure Studies*, 37(4), 371–383.
- Verma, M., & Verma, K. (2018). Social Media a Promotional Tool: Hotel Industry. *Journal of Advances In Humanities*, 5(1), 221–223.
- Wang, R., & Chen, T. (2014). An Empirical Study on use of Social Media in the Hotel Industry in China: A Study of Customers' Preferences and Attitudes.