Analyzing the Potential of Social Media on Heritage Hotels of India

Rani Sharma

Research Scholar, Jaipur, Rajasthan

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 its 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 conclude, the present research paper proposes the analysis of social media to understand the traveler's behaviors and suggest the marketing tactics to hotels.

Keywords- *Social Media, Heritage Hotel, Travel Marketing.*

1. 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. Social media is an important tool for travelers by helping them to see new locations, direct engagement with a hotel, enhancing their satisfaction and also builds 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 is also been crucially 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 visibility.

Figure 1: Social media platform that connects travellers and Hotels

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 of 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, and social media participation 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 Sina Weibo) and hotel options in the industry. The study's findings show that associated hotels and network ticketing companies favour to utilize social media to captivate visitors and even likely customers, with the highest three factors influencing hotel selection being pricing (71.84 percent), location (68.16 percent), and online rating (33.06 percent).

2. HERITAGE HOTEL SELECTION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POTENCY: ITS DIRECT EFFECT.

Morale has improved as a result of social media. Travelers have power over information sharing since they utilize and captivate social networking platforms. As a result, travelers share only positive details about themselves with their social media networks. This constructive information mostly reverts with the affirmative response which magnifies the affirmative feedback. This eventually increases the assurance and yields various social media

benefits. Besides this, higher assurance and morale on positive information shared on social media eventually turns the traveler into impulsive and liberal booking and decisions. The decision in regards to booking heritage hotels has seemed to eliminate the rational behavior of travelers. Based on the information shared by other fellows, the impulsive decision is taken and the hotel is booked. The reason contributing to it is enhancing self-esteem, less control and exhibiting the privilege among their network of acquaintances.

Practically, heritage hotels exhibit luxurious and royal expenditure which enhances the traveler's prestige. Booking of the heritage hotels for stay is more showing off than the necessity. And it has been assumed that higher intensity of using social networking sites results in an absurd decision of booking a heritage hotel. Believing this, the first hypothesis of the study is framed as - **H_1:** Increase use of social media positively affects the booking of heritage hotels.

3. METHODOLOGY

To test the hypothesis, the study collected a sample from Indian travelers. For the data collection convenience sampling was used with a functional sample size of 571. Data is collected online through Goggle forms.

4. VARIABLES, DATA ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT

India, an important nation that exhibits diverse cultures and traditions. For the study, two main variables are considered. Which are – Social Media Potency and Booking of Heritage Hotel. The following variables have been analyzed with the help of six-point Likert scales.

Constructs	Question	Variable	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 Bush and Gilbert (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...? (Where 1 is "Strongly Disagree" and 6 is "Strongly Agree")	BHH 1: It's important to know what my colleague thinks of a heritage hotel I'm considering booking. 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).

Table 1: Representing the Research Constructs and Variables.

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 stats, 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.
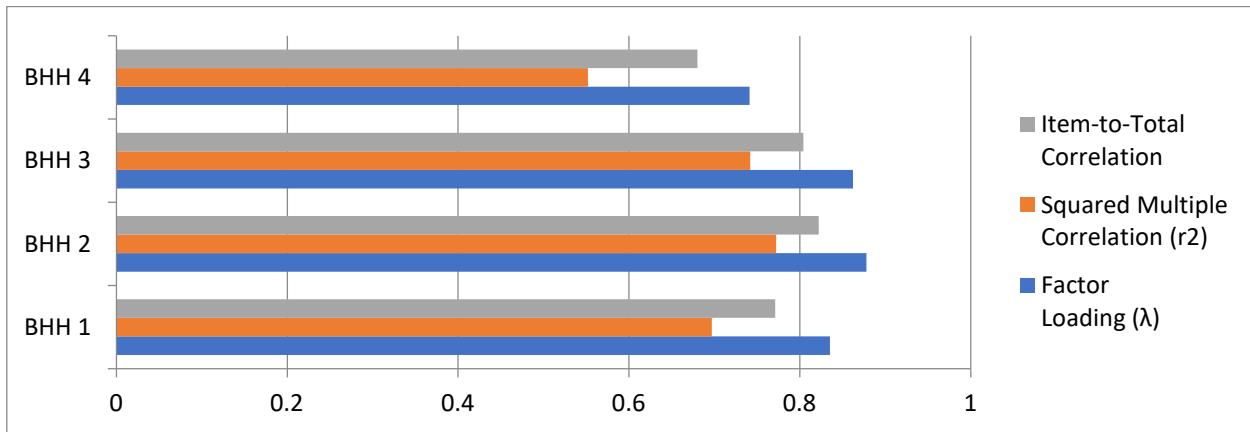
To analyze and inspect the reliability of constructs, variables, and scales, composite reliability (*cr*) and Cronbach's Alpha (α) were

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.
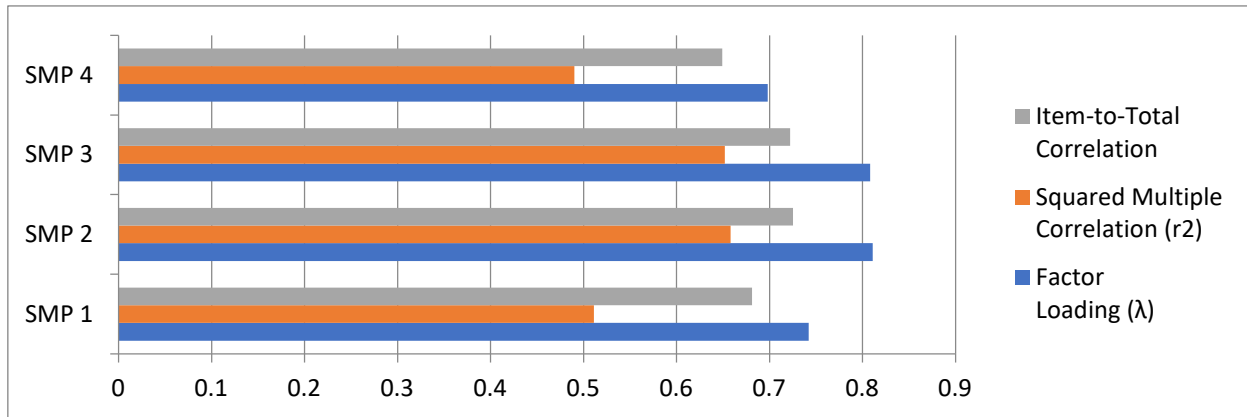
Figure 2: Delineating the analysis of Social Media Potency (SMP)

Figure 3: Delineating the analysis of Booking of Heritage Hotel (BHH)

Construct	Composite Reliability (*cr*)	Cronbach's Alpha (*α*)	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. Delineating the analysis of reliability and validity of research constructs.

The usual approach provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) was used to determine reliability and scale validity. 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.

5. 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. The following figure no. 5. depicts positive structural coefficients with a significant p<.01and 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 β = .384 and p <.01). Thus, the data validates H_1.

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

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

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. The findings of the data analysis are also consistent with Stephen's and Wilcox (2013) study, which claims that surfing and using social media tempt vacationers to spend a little more and feel fabulous by displaying status. As a result, those who spend more time on social media are more prone to make snap decisions about vintage hotels.

6. 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. Besides this, it also calls for

researchers to give insight as in academic purpose and develop theories. 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 what they wish. 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. This often leads the way to make an impulsive and irrational booking. 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 and on basis of which they make the booking decision. As a result, the study supports the social network strategy and expands the trip marketing literature through highlighting activity and possibilities.

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.

7. 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 the generalizability of further development of advanced theories.

References

Acar, A. S. & Polonsky, M. (2007). Online social networks and insights into marketing communications. Journal of Internet Commerce, 6(4), 55-72. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15332860802086227.

A. K. Bhatt, A. K. Verma and R. Gaur, "Consumer Cognizance about Forex Card in Digital Epoch," 2020 International Conference on Computation, Automation and Knowledge Management (ICCAKM), 2020, pp. 493-498, doi: 10.1109/ICCAKM46823.2020.9051547.

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.

Bearden, W. O., Netemeyer, R. G. & Teel, J. E. (1989). Measurement of consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence. Journal of   Consumer Research, 15(4), 473-481.

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.

Doyle, S. (2007). The role of social networks in marketing. Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy   Management,   15(1),   60-64. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.dbm.3250070.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of facebook's 'friends': Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 12(4), 1143-1167.
Fogel, J. & Nehmad, E. (2009). Internet social network communities: risk taking, trust and privacy concerns. Computers in Human Behavior, 25(1), 153-160. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2008.08.006.

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? Retrieved from https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/57263/1/Healy_Wilson_QUIS_2015_social_media_marketing_in_the_hospitality_industry.pdf

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18(1), 38–52. doi: 10.1002/dir.10073

Janusz, T. (2009). Marketing on social networks: twitter, myspace and facebook demystified. a publication of the independent computer consultants association, 35(4), 16-17.

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.

Long, Mia C (2011) Beyond the Press Release: Social Media as a Tool for Customer Engagement. Social Media: Usage and Impact. pp 235. Lexington Press.

Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: the new hybrid element of the promotion mix. Business Horizons, 52(4), 357-365. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002.

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. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/6903023/The_Effect_of_Social_Networking_sites_On_Hotel_Industry_in_Pune_Region

S. Vinerean, I.Cetina, L.Dumitrescu, and M. Tichindelean, The effects of social media marketing on online consumer behavior. International Jornal of Business and Management, 8(14), 66, 2013. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610380012

Verma, M., & Verma, K. (2018). Social Media a Promotional Tool: Hotel Industry. Journal of Advances In Humanities, 5(1), 221–223. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322329605_Social_Media_a_Promotional_Tool_Hotel_Industry

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. Retrieved from https://scholarsarchive.jwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1032&context=mba_student

Wilcox, K. & Stephen, A. T. (2013). Are close friends the enemy? Online social networks, self esteem, and self-control. Journal of Consumer Research, 40(1), 90-103.