Optimizing Digital Marketing in Hospitality Industries

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Digital marketing is currently an important aspect of the hospitality industry as it allows hotels to reach out and connect with potential guests as they spend most of their time digitally. Currently, not all hotels take advantage to spend their money on annual budgets to make digital marketing strategies more effective, such as social media, which only makes promotions without any interaction with their followers, Search Engine Optimizer investment, and online hotel review. In the competitive hospitality industry, a strong digital presence is critical to attracting and retaining customers. Hotels can use a variety of digital marketing strategies to grow their business and capture the attention of potential guests. This study uses different digital marketing strategies to do business with different social media platforms and uses the medium of search engine optimization (SEO) to optimize websites and content for specific keywords. Digital marketing is a powerful tool for hotels looking to attract and retain customers in the digital age. The main objective of the magazine is to outline digital marketing strategies for the different target groups of hotels and the most diverse tourism players. By utilizing the various channels and digital technologies available, hotels can effectively reach and engage with their audience and drive business growth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the hospitality world, there is still a standardization gap, especially between local and international hotels in the use of digital business because of the perspective that brand awareness requires an expensive investment based on the observations of the author who is a practitioner in the hospitality sector. The hospitality sector has evolved into a digital one in this day and age, utilizing a variety of tools and applications such as mobile, cloud, online travel agencies (OTAs), artificial intelligence (Chatbots using dynamic pricing and database management), blockchain, and internet of things (IoT). Hotels, therefore, have the opportunity to interact with clients at every stage of the customer journey by offering tailored experiences [1]. In order to compete in the market against airlines, food and beverage producers, and travel agencies, the hospitality sector must go beyond simply being customer-centric. About 80% of travelers look up hotel information on the internet. It's becoming common to make reservations using an online travel agency (OTA). Hotel distribution channels have seen a significant transformation with the emergence of numerous additional OTAs and the 1996 launches of Expedia, Priceline, and Hotwire. Traditional contracted booking channels, namely wholesalers and tour operators, have seen significant market share losses to OTAs.[2] The new digital era has three main objectives: partners (transparent relationships), customers (seamless journeys), and staff (digital empowerment) [3]. To improve their customers, partners, and employees' digital experiences, major hotel operators budgeted more than USD 274 million on digital strategy over a five-year period [2].

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Internet use and the hotel industry

The hospitality industries have undergone major adjustments recently. Most likely, the hotel improved its technology due to the intense market competition, which created potential to increase revenue.[4]

2.2 What Is Digital Marketing?

Digital marketing is an act or practice of introducing something through a digital distribution channel to get the attention of consumers in a relevant way [5]. Digital Marketing is how to market a brand or products using media digital. Which includes digital media including television, radio, internet, mobile phone, social media, and various digital media other media, where techniques of internet marketing are included in digital category marketing [6] SEO (Search Engine Optimizer) helps the hotel to increase visibility, generate more bookings and revenue and improve its online reputation, and making more competitive in the market [7]

Hotels may effectively raise their brand awareness, foster customer loyalty, and increase bookings by using social media marketing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Google Ads. These platforms also offer affordable and targeted marketing options. Other platforms where PPC (pay-per-click) can be used include Facebook and Twitter-promoted tweets [8]

Below is the power of PPC:
- The ability to track multiple kinds of website visitor behavior
- Targeting different ad networks
- Targeting users of a variety of devices
- More detailed reporting that exposes
- A growing variety of Ad types and channels.[8]

Offline Marketing Channels refer to traditional ways such as Television, Newspaper, Radio, Direct email, etc. can also be a great way for businesses to reach the audience but will be more expensive and it can be harder to measure the return on investment.[9]

"Marketing has always been about connecting with your audience in the right place and at the right time. Today, that means you need to meet them where they are already spending time: on the internet". (Alexander, 2019)

Based on a survey from "The Statistics Portal" there are 4.4 billion users were active on the internet and 3.4 billion were active on social media.[9]
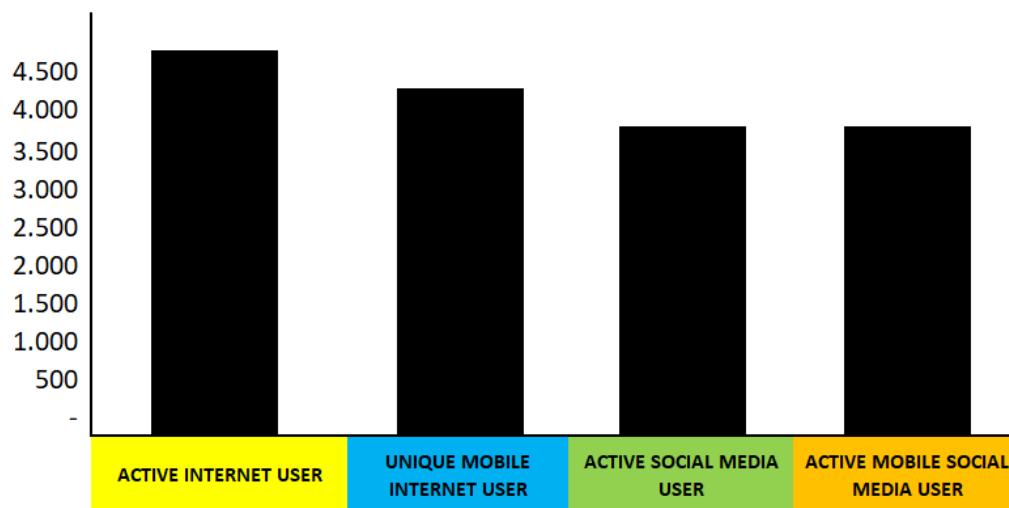

Figure 1. Global Statistic Population April 2019

2.3 Effective Hotel Digital Marketing Strategies

The process of transforming a business into a digital one includes digital marketing. By putting these tactics into practice, hotels may improve their online reputation, gain access to more powerful customer relationship management tools, and offer the highest levels of customer satisfaction.

2.4 Digital Marketing Strategies for Hotel Industry

The objective of online marketing channels must be S.M.A.R.T. When choosing which social media platforms to employ, specific objectives should be considered as they mirror the marketing objectives; Having Set measurable objectives will help you determine whether the action plan you've created has ultimately been successful. Goals that seem unattainable should be avoided; instead, choose goals that are doable. Similarly, to this, having realistic goals means considering every external aspect that might have an impact on the outcome. Goals should also be time-based, which implies they should have an end date. Setting goals can encourage people to put more effort into their efforts and become more persistent in what they are doing [9]

2.5 Digital Marketing Trends

Figure 2. Top Trends Digital Marketing 2015

More than 80% of people on Earth currently use a device in some capacity. Some people have continued to utilize devices as an expensive way of life for the past few years. People can do a lot more things with their cell phones going forward, including making internet purchases [10]. Therefore, a hotel's mobile presence is essential, especially given the contemporary environment [11]. A hotel's website needs to be contemporary and user-friendly. It follows that the consumer must identify what they need quickly and purchase what they feel is necessary. Social networking is crucial for hotels as well [12]. Social media can raise brand awareness and spread knowledge about the hotel sector to an ever-growing audience [13].

The customer journey is what we refer to when we talk about content marketing. To draw in and keep the attention of a particular target audience, this entails producing and disseminating valuable, pertinent, and consistent information [14]. This can be accomplished by producing eye-catching blog posts, movies, or infographics that highlight the property [15].

In terms of the user experience, a hotel website should feature photos, blogs, and most importantly—be fast and responsive. The performance of the web pages can be monitored and evaluated.

For the hotel industry, paid search presence, such as SEO and SEM, is crucial. In order to do this, adverts must be placed on search engines or other websites, and a price must be paid each time an ad is clicked. This may be a useful strategy for increasing website traffic and bookings for the hotel. Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is the most well-known method for having a presence in sponsored search, and the business is compensated each time an ad is clicked.

3. METHOD

The research methodology employed is descriptive research, which is a method of research designed to describe current occurrences that are occurring [16]. A methodical, factual, and accurate description of the facts and characteristics of a particular research item is the goal of descriptive research [17].

3.1 Describe the Hotel Digital Customer Journey

It will be necessary for hospitality businesses to meet these expectations on their interactions in order to embrace the new digital urge brought on by the industry's patrons, which will turn on boosting brand revenues.[18]

3.2 What are the stages of the hotels' digital customer journey?

The following diagram highlights the contrasts between the previous product approach and the current customer journey methodology.
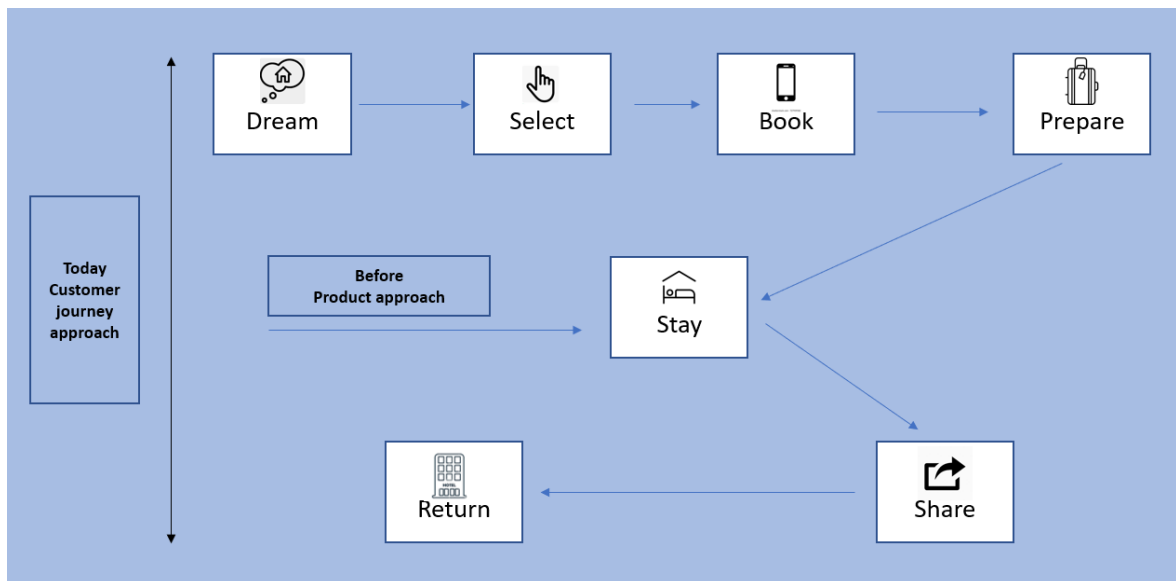

Figure 3. Customer Journey flowchart

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. ACTIVES IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Over the past twenty years, there have been significant developments and disruptions in the hospitality sector. Customers ask for intense personalization and distinctive travel encounters [19]. Because they've experienced a variety of hotel brands and high-quality services, guests are now more informed and empowered to tell more, complain more, and demand more from the hotel [20].

The hotel industry's previous period has already undergone digital transformation. There are three types of online criminals:

- Airbnb and HomeAway are disruptive companies that have a significant impact on the market and hold a significant market share. They expand in low-cost lodging and on platforms like Airbnb, which dominates the P2P (peer-to-peer) lodging sector. The results of a study)[21]

- Online travel agencies with a medium level of change and a medium share in the value chain are innovators (Booking.com, Expedia). Expedia and Booking Holdings today dominate the US, European, and Asian markets with their respective names, virtually completely replacing hotel brands[22]

- Users can use aggregators, or metasearch websites, such as TripAdvisor, Skyscanner, and Trivago, to find the best deals from all the results the aggregator has discovered. Customers can easily determine their booking price thanks to this, and it has also influenced the caliber or ranking of hotel services in that region [23].
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4.2 HOSPITALITY CUSTOMER JOURNEY

The processes from the time consumers begin researching hotels or other accommodations to the time they check out and depart are referred to as the customer journey in the hospitality sector [24]. The following steps are often part of the client journey:

- Awareness: This is the initial stage where the customer becomes aware of the hotel or hospitality service and starts considering it as an option. This can happen through online research, word-of-mouth, or social media campaign [25].
- Research: In this stage, the customer starts researching the hotel or service more in-depth, looking at things like location, pricing, and reviews. They may visit the hotel's website or TripAdvisor reviews on travel websites or compare prices on booking sites [26].
- Consideration: In this stage, the customer is actively considering booking a stay at the hotel or using the service.
- Booking: Once the customer has decided to book a stay, they will go through the process of reserving a room or making a reservation. This can happen through the hotel's website, an OTA, or by calling the hotel directly [27].
- Pre-stay: In this stage, the customer will receive confirmation of their booking, and may receive additional information about the hotel or service [28], [29].
- Stay: The customer will arrive at the hotel and check-in and will spend time experiencing the hotel. He may also interact with staff during their stay.
- Post-stay: After the customer has checked out, they may leave feedback or reviews of their experience. The hotel may also follow up with them to ask for feedback or to encourage them to book again in the future.

By understanding the customer journey, hotels and other hospitality providers can optimize each stage to provide a better experience for customers and encourage repeat business

A cognitive perception known as customer experience will be produced as a result of this experience. Those involved in hotels at every stage are:
- Pinterest (Dream stage) (Dream stage)
- Trivago, trivago.com - International hotel price comparison (Choose stage)
- Booking.com is a travel metasearch engine used to book lodging (Book stage)
- Wipolo is a smartphone app that centralizes all of your journeys, available at https://www.wipolo.com/. (Prepare stage)
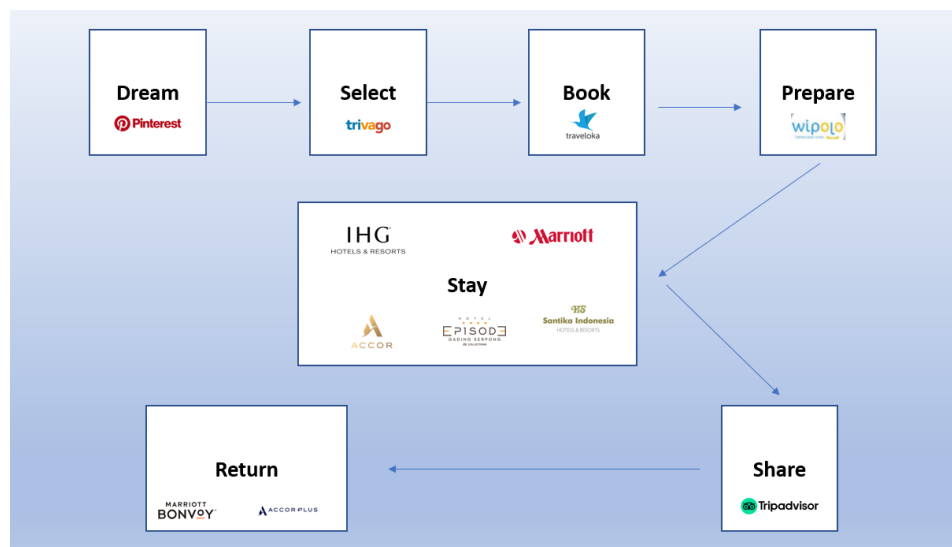- Travel Guide (Share stage)
- loyalty initiative (Return stage)

Figure 4. Customer Experience Flow Chart

The use of technology to enhance customer experience has risen quickly. By hiring personnel with knowledge in digital media and technology, a number of Leading Hotel Operators have encouraged their hotels to improve their customer experience and expand their digital capabilities. They also use data analytics to track digital customer journeys from metasearch sites like TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, and OTA Review Compiling into programs like Trust You or Medallia to achieve customer personalization. This allows them to stand out from competitors by providing innovations to both existing and potential customers [30]

4.3. DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY FOR HOTELS

The importance of digital marketing and sales methods in the hotel industry is rising. Hotels are putting into practice a variety of marketing plans and creating a wide range of digital marketing techniques. Typically, hotels employ for-profit digital tools: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, Email Marketing (own and third-party databases), Search Engine Marketing (Google Ads), and Review Websites are examples of Social Media Marketing (TripAdvisor, Medallia and TrustYou) Additionally, hotels leverage big data marketing, their web tactics, and mobile applications to enhance visitor experiences. In the customer acquisition stage, traditional marketing methods (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, brochure) are also crucial, but they must work in conjunction with a digital marketing strategy to be effective.

The push strategy to convert demand and the stage of driving demand are both included in the customer acquisition process. The pull strategy combines digital social media marketing with traditional marketing methods.

In some hotels, the visitor experience is encouraged by Digital platforms for online check-in and quick check-out, as well as in-app hotel services.

Table 1: Hotel Digital Marketing Strategy

The Customer Journey's Stages	Strategy for Digital Marketing
Customer Acquisitions	A plan for increasing demand
	conventional marketing techniques
	Presence on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn as part of a social media marketing strategy
	Strong Brand sponsorships to have collaboration Music Concert, Football Club, KOL (Key Opinion Leader), Influencer
	High-impact paid search advertising is an effective method of search engine marketing.
	Partnership approach: successful metasearch engine
	Convert Demand
	Using a large database and excellent push expertise, implement big data analytics
Distribution	Website for the brand: all.accor.com+brand.com Online travel agencies, the Global Distribution System (GDS), Sabre, and conventional travel agencies are all part of the web partner strategy.
	Techniques for mobile marketing Mobile devices account for 70% of all website visits.
	Customer Care: Call center ready 24 hours
Guest Experience	Fast check-out, online check-in, and branded digital services for visitors One-click payment: individual e-wallets In-room smart TV service (room service, restaurant menu, taxi, etc.)
Customer Retention	Online customer feedback tactics: Every hotel has online guest feedback management capabilities. Bringing visitors back plan: Brand Loyalty Initiative

Source: Accor, 2019

The marketing team at Hotel Group engages in a variety of marketing initiatives in an effort to increase customer loyalty and brand awareness. One of them is running

marketing campaigns on a monthly or annual basis to bring in new clients and opportunities. Advertising, direct marketing, web activity, and national promotions are combined for greater outcomes by working with strategic marketing organizations.

5. CONCLUSION

Digital marketing is a must for today's hospitality world because of the lifestyle of customers who are very active with their gadgets when booking rooms or events. By spending money on digital marketing, hotels can raise their standing and revenue to enhance client acquisition, and customer retention and customer loyalty programs should be the main goals of this strategy to win the competition in the market. Customers want a fantastic hotel experience with individualized service and great products to spend their money.

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