

Impact of Societal Media on Buyer Behaviour in Hospitality and Tourism Industry: A Review

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Abstract: - The recent emergence of online social networks has changed the technological and communications landscape of the hospitality and tourism industry. Social media becomes an important communication tool that people use to connect to other people or organization. Individuals use social media to share their experiences, information, advice, information or reviews or any kind of issues that are fascinating to their friends. That information is a useful source, which may influence consumer's decision – making. Consumers feel safer subscribing to opinions stated by masses as people try to imitate others behaviour. The social media environment is easily applicable and reachable to the customers. The benefits offered by the social media help people in achieving in a very convenient way what they are looking for. It is a human tendency to believe in and follow the same what their friends recommend. Facebook, Twitter or Myspace being the most popular social media sites allows people to share their lifestyles, success stories and even their vacation mark and experiences of the same. The information posted on these sites can lead their connections or friends to follow the same and hence can influence their decision.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the growth in the use of internet globally, the use of social networking sites is incredibly increased. Earlier the use of social networking sites was confined to the entertainment activity only, but now days social networking sites are increasingly used for job search communication, making purchase decisions, marketing etc. With the emergence of social media the ways of communication changed in the hotel and tourism industry. Earlier in order to gain information about the destination consumers were bound to take the help of intermediaries but with boom of web 2 technology the consumers are opened to the wide sea of information. In this regard Social media has become an important factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behaviour. It is an effective channel to interact with the customers and an efficient personal relation tool for creating brand awareness among the consumers.

II. INFLUENCE ON THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Travel and tourism has always relied on the word of mouth for their promotion and marketing, so in today's world with significant technological phenomenon Social media emerged

as an ultimate tool for word of mouth promotion providing travellers with a gateway to the opinions and recommendations of people, including friends within their social network and like-minded travellers. On one hand the social media have created a new distribution channel and opened a deep well for marketing research area. On the other part social media have changed the method of the customers determination where they will stay particularly leisure travellers. As hospitality industries products and services are intangible, consumers are highly dependent on others opinion when consumers make purchase decision. According to a report of Nielsen company 92% of global consumers trust earned media such as word of mouth and recommendations from family and friends above all other forms of advertising. Dr. Fotis identifies six social media functional aspect that enclose active user's specific behaviour: inspiration, collaboration, decision making, self expression, communication and entertainment. It shows that social media is generally used during all the stages of vacation plan or any event plan as first three behaviour are observed before travel or event and the rest of the three behaviour are mostly shown by people during and after the holiday trip or any event.

Tourists are highly involved in the decisions surrounding their travel practices. Admittance to information has made the customer an active contributor thus boosting their ego and confidence. Tourist book over the internet after several comparisons on various websites. Consumers feel pride on getting the best deals than other travellers.

III. WHY SOCIAL MEDIA IS SO POPULAR?

Social media being user friendly offers many advantages to the consumers like worldwide presence, ease of access, straightforwardness, everywhere versatility for interactive exchanges.

Tourism industry is an information based and information incentive industry. Due to the experimental nature of holiday and travel related acquire decision the consumers need to assemble a large amount of information in order to reduce the high threat associated with the purchase decision. Appropriate information about the particular destination can boost

consumer's confidence while decision making and hence also enhance the quality of their trips. Fotis, Ruhalis, and rossides(2012) reported that 82 % US customers who go online looked upon online reviews from travel and hotel sites for making purchase decision, online consumer review play a big part in the choice of hotel and travel .With the rise in the number of websites (like yelp, TripAdvisor and social networking sites such as Facebook Myspace etc. that give potential consumer an opportunity to look upon the reviews by other real consumers.

It's a common human tendency of people to follow their friends and relatives if they find them happy with something , the best example is seen while making travel related decision as many of the consumers travel plan and destination are inspired by photos , remarks and videos posted on the social networking sites and this accounts nearly 52 % of consumers globally.

One more reason people trust earned media than some sort of advertising as travelling abroad for enjoying memorable moments(Like wedding , honeymoon trips , baby moon trips) involves not only large investment but special feelings attached with these events, hence today's consumer being the new Researcher want to make sure they get the worth of money . people who share on the social media about these particular events consumers are largely influenced by the this media while making purchase decision.

In addition these social networking sites these day can be accessible through smartphones, ipads and tablets . According to a recent report nearly 32% of consumers use mobile apps to find hotel deals.

IV. SOCIAL MEDIA AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Social networking sites are not only great helping tool for the customer but indeed they provide many benefits to the whole industry . research findings indicate that customers enjoy building online relationships with tour operators and hotels and that online special deals and discounts might be counterproductive in building brand loyalty through Social media. According to Assenov and Khurana (2012) "Social media results in horizontal relationship that reaches every part of the business , from customer service to customer acquisition to customer retention ,unlike a vertical layer such as advertising." Social media offers a platform for connecting the hotels, restaurants, travel agencies to connect with their prospective customers. Being on the front end of the social networking phenomenon hotels can achieve cost and time effective means of interaction and engagement with the customers .For this the hotels just need to be an online active, which accounts for very small investment, but instead provide an efficient marketing tool . Moreover if hotels can use social media to associate with the minds and hearts of consumers , then they can generate a positive brand image of their hotels .Since the reviews can both be positive and negative hence it

provides opportunity to the hotels to improve themselves . Many of the hotels have employed staff to handle the social image of their hotels thus building brand equity.

V. PROBLEMS

Social media has become popular as e-WOM i.e. electronic word of mouth in today's scenario .But the problems faced by the consumers is that many hotels to increase their customers go for the false reviews which creates dilemma for the consumers .Many hotels pay cash for the good reviews to the people who are even not the consumer of the services .That's a big confront for the customers whether to trust the online reviews on the site or not .As consumers reviews can both be positive and negative, any negative comment can obstruct hotels image. A consumer may give a fake statement about the company on the basis of his/ her negative perception and this can impact the perception of other consumers.

VI. CONCLUSION

Social media is becoming increasingly popular in tourism and hospitality industry. Consumers are using social networking sites to plan their trips and stays at hotel. Many hotels are using social media to reach their customers as communication and information have huge impacts on the consumer's decision making. Social media are a very wide-ranging concept and include a multiplicity of websites where there is large information which can be shared among the users. Despite the false comments can defame brand image but it's no denying the fact that social networking sites are very helpful creating brand awareness and attracting new customers .Lastly , in today's world of social media the online reviews , comments , blogs have tremendous impact on the consumers decision making and purchases.

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