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## **CURRENT TRENDS IN DIGITAL MARKETING FOR HOTELS IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article will throw a light on identify marketing strategies used in hospitality industry. Along with the advantages and disadvantages of digital marketing .Some of these strategies are old school marketing strategies like print media, advertisement where hospitality companies identify the marketing environment along with its customers and competitors in the market. The selection of the new age marketing techniques which in this article are referred as e -marketing techniques quoting example of the company name Internetmogul which manages digital marketing for the hotel industry and have currently 50 brands under them who achieved success using digital marketing strategies laid by internet moguls.*

*In the end there are some recommendations on digital marketing strategies for companies which strategies should be adopted to maximize the efficiency of the brand. This includes social media optimization and hotel's own website along with its search engine optimization. These are some suggestions for the hoteliers who want to achieve success over the competitors and to penetrate the target market in less of time.*

### **Introduction**

The traditional forms of direct marketing used in hotel industry are direct mail marketing, telephone marketing (Kotler et al, 2011) these traditional ways of marketing have its advantages

such as direct one –to one communication with the guests, but the target market is selective and it costs more in comparison with digital direct marketing.

The definition of digital marketing according to IDM includes the management and execution of marketing using electronic media such as the web, email, interactive TV, wireless media in connection with digital data about customers characteristic and behavior ( Bhatia,2017)

Digital marketing is the most effective marketing strategies in today’s fast growing hospitality sector in India. Using e-marketing to sell hospitality products which have curial characteristics of being tangible and intangible .as hotel industry is highly customer oriented and service oriented customer have vast range of alternative to chose and where as hotel company will often compete for the same prospective customer. Adopting theses e -marketing strategies has definitely made hotels noticeable and endorses their hotel as a best available choice.

### **Advantages of digital marketing**

**Easy consumer reach:** as the wide range of internet network available it is easier to reach targeted consumer, with the less time and cost as consumers being more techno savvy. Hotels have also used these marketing activities on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

**Direct advertising:** digital marketing helps to reach out to its targeted customers directly which gives the platform to hoteliers to talk about the product and services in more detail along with the brand. Direct advertisement helps digital marketer to create healthy completion amongst all digital marketer and perform well.

**Perpetually Displaying Advertisement:** digital marketing achieve the goal of advertisement by reaching to its customer any time and place as there are no constraint for the same.

**Cost effective channels:** it’s cost-effective in comparison with old marketing channels like, radio, TV newspaper. Banners, etc company can outsource the another agency to do it for them like Internet moguls, limetray are the current agency where hoteliers can keep accountability of the digital marketing activity

## **Disadvantages of Digital Marketing:**

**Constraint on internet access:** as digital marketing is completely dependent on internet sometimes potential guest might have poor access or connection to the internet.

**High competition:** most of the hoteliers prefer the digital marketing it creates s the huge competition as guest has lots of option to choose over wide range of product and services so it's difficult to retain the guest.

**Possibility of hacking promotion strategies:** as all digital marketing is based or completely depend on the internet there are lots of possibilities to copy valuable promotion and tack them as well. (Abbas, 2017)

**Anti brand activities:** As Gonzales (2017) mentions, there is lot of possibilities of spoiling the brand image which is often referred as Doppelganger. Where bloggers, opinion leaders will contribute in building of brand image as well as anti brand image.

Following are the few digital marketing strategies that companies prefer as digital marketing ways to reach to their customers

**Search engine optimization:** each and every hotel company will have their own website but its significance is limited if it's not finding effortless for the same reason search engine optimization is extremely important. Search engine tools such as Trip Advisor, Google Hotel Finder and Trivago have earned thrust in last couple of years as customers find this an easy option to compare existing rates. SEO is an important marketing channel, it will help hotel companies to advance their rankings on these websites and make better returns. By optimizing your website with the use of keyword search so large company hire software for key word search to keep their business on top at search and local hotel can do it own their own to save on the cost (Barten, 2017)

**Pay per click advertising:** these are the sponsored links can be seen on search sites it is a short term basis because once company decide to stop the payment it will automatically stop the advertisement .Pay per Click payment may vary as it depends on what purpose you are doing the advertisement.

**Social media:** is the most efficient ,competent and trendy form of advertising to reach out to the maximum potential customers, as it creates conversation especially with next generation who love to share updates about themselves online. Best examples for these are Face book, Instagram Twitter where hoteliers can use this influential platform to get connected with their targeted customers. It acts as two way communication, in which Customers construct sort of kinship with the brand. Social media is an excellent method to promote relations with past, existing and potential guests where hotelier accurately understand their customer needs, wants and try to achieve their expectations to reduce the gap. (Barten, 2017)

**Online travel agent:** in today's day and age technology plays very influential role in customers buying decision, as travel agent is the oldest and most effective distribution channel used by the hoteliers to get connected with millennial as they make buying decision based on attractive tour packages, seasonal deals. So there by hoteliers offer all this options through all the online distribution channels to its targeted customers.

**Company website:** hotels try to maximize its room's revenue through its own website and technological advancement has complemented the business like mobile friendly website or apps it is used as direct channel to reach out to the potential customers almost all the hotel brand website offer a low price guarantee. OTA's offer alternative for the seller and crates the competition amongst hotel companies, there by the least distribution channel for the distribution of hotel rooms is the direct channel over the internet that is why hotel brands have placed prominence on their own web site . (Kotler et al, 2011) this encourages guests to book directly with the hotel rather than through an OTA's or other intermediary. As mentioned above online marketing or e marketing is the fastest growing form of direct marketing and technological advancement have created a digital age (Kotler et al, 2011)

Below diagram will explain more on the today digital marketing with direct and online marketing;



(Kotler et al., 2011)

To understand the digital marketing strategies following is the small example of case study on social media optimization for Sayaji Hotels and by Internet Moguls (digital marketing agency).

Internet moguls is company which does digital marketing for hotel and travel industry they started this organization in 2009 they have almost 50 different brands which includes hotel and tourism company under their umbrella. To name few four points by Sheraton, le meridian Pune, westin, Ramada, crown plaza, Clark’s inn sayaji hotel

There research says why hotel companies approach them as Hotel Company has faced following problems

1. Guests engagement with the hotel
2. Customers need to get emotionally connected to the brand
3. To triumph the patronage of the guests.
4. To maintain the brand status.

Sayaji hotel;

Challenges

1. Hotel had very few images of restaurant, and food to display on web.

2. Guest was unaware of the other recreational facilities that hotel offers

To overcome the challenges internet moguls decided following objectives

1. Company decided to adopt the social media optimization strategies to boost conversion of potential guests.
2. To expand the awareness among the targeted customer about the hotel
3. Location strategies to endorse the striking place
4. To build the long term relationship with the targeted audience potential as well as new one.
5. To increase website passage

These above mentioned objectives were achieved by using following digital marketing strategy

1 **Focus on exclusivity:** company decide to give utmost focus on social media to highlight the exclusiveness of the hotel along with its different destinations where hotels another property is located.

2. **Increase engagement:** various events and campaigns were conducted to enhance the engagement.

3. **Maintaining the brand image:** social media calendar were created giving emphasis on core content of in room dining, restaurant, rooms following theme of the hotel across all the properties of the hotel .

## **Conclusion**

Considering all of above mentioned information about digital marketing strategies. All the hotels adopt digital marketing channels to boost their revenue with the fast pace and less cost. It allows hotels to reach deeper to the target market, as digital marketing is two ways communication process which reduces the gap of communication and it can be more specific to the customer needs and wants. Simultaneously it creates a bond between a brand and a consumer. It helps hotels to change marketing strategy depending on current feedbacks and events. Digital marketing becomes a revolutionary change in marketing strategy due to the technological advancement.

## Recommendation

Following are the recommendation for the hoteliers to use e marketing strategies which are most effectives to sustain in today's cut throat competition. Having said this all the other digital marketing strategies are equally important and hoteliers can adopt all but they can't skip the following ones.

1. **Social media optimization:** its most effective tool of digital marketing where hotel companies must use these tools to retain and attract new customer as this tool is used by present guest as well as potential guest. If companies don't use this tool they will be thrown out the completion very fast.
2. **Company own website:** very much useful in today day and age ,as customers are more and more techno savvy they would prefer to go online to reduce time gap, as its very beneficial for the hotel companies also where they can guaranty lower rates if customers book form its companies own website choosing over the other digital medium such as OTA's.
3. **Search engine optimization:** hoteliers prefer their own company website still SEO is equally important medium as competition is huge and key word search is key to achieve success in this competitive era of technology. These SEO advances the hoteliers ranking and gives better returns.

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