



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND RESTAURANTS

Dr. Suvarna Sathe and Mr. Mahesh Randhave

Use of social media has now -a –days become a basic need of human life next to food, clothing and shelter. Social media refers to various platforms that enable people around the world to connect, chat, and share content and video call. A person can sign up and access to number of social media platforms simultaneously. Some of the common and widely used social media platforms are Face book, Twitter, WhatsApp amongst many others. We live in a society where electronic gadget users are multiplying. As the usage of these gadgets increases, social media becomes even more easily accessible.

For successful and sustainable Restaurant business operations in a highly competitive market, it is very important to have a perfect marketing policy. It's common now days to check the website of a restaurant before being there to check reviews and feedbacks on menu offered, service, facilities etc. There is wide range of tools available to restaurants for online marketing. One important tool is a website. The number of people using the internet has exploded in the last few years. As the number of consumers using the internet increases, restaurant business looking for ways to interact with them online. Gaining new customers and retaining the existing customers is essential for every restaurant. Thus, by maintaining good social media marketing strategies, restaurants will be able to have the competitive advantage.

Following are few advantages,

1. Helps in creating brand awareness and becoming popular.
2. Helps to increase sales
3. Gives opportunity to respond customer's comments whether it is positive or negative.
4. Well designed and informative website can help to boost the restaurant business.
5. Easy to track competitors activities and plan accordingly.

6. It helps to develop relationship with customers.

Social media marketing has some disadvantages as well,

1. Selection of inappropriate social network may result in waste of time and money.
2. Lack of skills in Customer Relation Management may hamper the organization to decrease in sales. One should understand social sites are not just for posting pictures, videos of the product but it should be used for creating a good relationship with customers.
3. It is a time consuming task and managing time is a difficult part. Followers could be reduced if inquiries are not responded in time. Further, updating the social media timely is must.
4. Negative reviews and comments in social sites hamper business as well as brand image of restaurant.

Social media marketing has widely accepted and effective way to reach consumers at low cost. The conversations created through social media are important to customers because it allows users to communicate with each other in a more trusted medium of talking to people just like them. Many restaurants today have jumped on to the social media and have start using it as a primary marketing tool.

Electronic “word of mouth” marketing is free advertising for the restaurants when it is done by its loyal customers. The fact that anybody can use this type of marketing at very low cost, it motivates consumers to start taking advantage of social media sites. For restaurants, this is particularly important, since the services offered at restaurants have many intangible aspects. Past research has found that consumers are motivated to spread positive word of mouth – if they have had a good experience at a restaurant. Social media is altering restaurant operations, including promotions, marketing, customer relations, and methods of managing employees. Restaurant operators now have a new opportunities and challenges along with their core purposes of providing guests with a meal and an experience that the guest perceives as valuable based on the price paid.

For restaurant owner, it is essential to,

1. Understand that the Reviews and customer feedback are now a part of almost every business.

2. Monitor what's being said about the restaurant on social media platform.
3. Listen carefully to a customer's complaints regarding food and services offered at restaurant. It is the opportunity to fix a problem.
4. Respond to online reviews. React immediately to solve the problem. If the restaurant is getting more complaints than compliments, then there is something wrong with product, or service, and the way that restaurant is functioning. You need to react to such problem to prevent future problems.
5. Share customer generated content. Amplify the Message of customers who are saying nice things about restaurant.
6. Identify the key places where a restaurant needs to be part of a conversation and don't dominate or lead it.
7. Spotlight the restaurant employees. Profiling the people behind any business is a great way to humanize the experience for customers. Posting pictures from "behind the scenes" is always helpful for marketing.
8. Ask questions to engage followers and customers. Social media is not just telling your followers what's happening at your restaurant but at the same time listening to them. Platforms like facebook, twitter, and instagram are a great way to create a two-way dialogue with your customers. Ask questions like "fill in the blank," "what is your favourite item?" and "what item would you like to see on our menu?" to inspire followers to engage with your posts and to interact with you rather than simply continuing to scroll down the page.
9. Host social media contests after regular intervals. There are number of contests you can run on social media. They're quick wins for both the restaurant and customers. By asking guests to participate in questions, fill-in-the-blanks, photo contests, or slogan contests, the restaurant is building rapport with guests and encouraging engagement online.
10. Use video's to show "life behind the scenes" of a restaurant, which can help the restaurant to build as a family-friendly brand.

Many research have been conducted regarding, "Social media and its impact on restaurant performance". The outcome of all theses researches are,

- Social media used in the restaurant industry is an efficient and effective way to reach out potential customer.

- Customer acquisition and retention has a positive relationship with social media as marketing medium.
- How restaurants manage their social media can have an impact on increasing revenue through targeting the right audience and building relationships.
- Use of social media today becoming prominent in the restaurant industry and started replacing traditional marketing such as paper advertisements, Television advertisements and brochures, where people want instant access to information. Social media will constantly evolve, bringing inventive ways to reach potential customers. Administered correctly this can not only bring higher revenues but also enhance the marketing strategy in the restaurant industry.

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