

Digital Marketing and Consumer Behaviour: An Empirical Study in Homestay Cottage Accommodation in the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu

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Abstract: The objective of the study is to examine the tourist satisfaction in online accommodation booking. Nowadays it is very common to conduct any kind of business online because of its practicality, accessibility and convenience. These days online is a community and it is a very effective way to build relation with the consumers. Hospitality firms like hotel and restaurants are using online community as a marketing tool to reach their customers. Studies have found four participation benefits as to participate in the online community marketing service. Internet is a communication tool which allows individuals and the organization to overcome geographical, time and age constraints. It also allows that the consumers and the companies around the world can connect at any time they want.

The target groups for the survey were the tourists visiting The Nilgiris in Tamilnadu. As the author is a traveler himself it was interesting to find out about other's traveling experiences and where they particularly preferred to stay during their travels. Distinguished travelers usually cannot afford to expensive luxury accommodation so therefore it was truly intriguing to find out their habits on this matter. In the survey the main questions were asked like which booking systems and sites did they mostly use and if they were satisfied with the services they received.

This report was divided into two parts whereas the theoretical framework was first introduced and then followed the empirical framework with the research methodology part. The quantitative research method was used in the report. Based on the study results it appeared that though both online marketing and online accommodation booking had mainly caused positive impacts on the respondent's travels and though they found that online booking system was very helpful, accessible and convenient, Television advertising and Word of Mouth were the most instrumental in pushing potential customers. This implies that though online digital communication is a powerful tool in conveying information to the customers, it is not yet the most widespread and influential medium.

Keywords: Accommodation Sector, Internet, online accommodation booking, online marketing.

1. Introduction

Accommodation is an element and a base of the wider hospitality sector which is most commonly used by tourists to engage in the process of staying at a certain destination. In the process a guest pays a fee and gets in return a specified service and grade of accommodation, and other associated services as well such as food and beverages. The evolution of the

accommodation establishment as a commercial venture have dominated the existence of accommodation, which has lead the entrepreneurs to respond to the demand for serviced accommodation of a high standard. Thus, the growths of resorts, areas of tourism activity and the demand to visit specific areas have escorted the development of accommodation. Accommodation has become an industry which may have two different dimensions. The first one comes from the point of view of a guest and the second one from the service provider's viewpoint. Guests could define it as a process which takes place in the accommodation sector for instance where they receive service that is beyond their expectations. On the other hand, the servers could define it as a simple process where they can impress the guests and serve them the very best they can.

2. Accommodation Sector and Digital Marketing

There are five main reasons why Accommodation establishments fail and they include location, poor management, poor customer service, poor accounting, and poor or non-existent marketing or advertising. To succeed in the hospitality sector, it is very vital to focus on all the previous matters but most specifically to the last point – Advertising and Marketing. Since the accommodation review sites such as Trip Advisor, Trivago etc. are becoming more popular it is important to have digital presence and be involved in it. On these review sites customers can review the accommodation establishments honestly and from there you can get real insight into what your customers think about your business and in which sectors you could improve. Obviously, this is not the only way to communicate with the customers. Social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter help to interact with the customers and highlight your company's special offers and events throughout the local area.

Customer insight marketing is closely attached with customer service. Customer perception affects to the fact whether an establishment can be successful or not. Customer's opinion matter and if they have positive things to say about the establishment, the business will continue to grow. Marketing campaigns such as special offers and events sent via digital platform are a great way to remind customers of your business especially during low-seasons. Since TV advertising is quite

expensive, so therefore having a blog with an excellent branding along with the website makes everything more engaging and gives the company a personal touch. Digital Marketing has become an indispensable part of the marketing strategy in the technology era. Almost every accommodation business is investing wisely in Digital Marketing to gain a competitive advantage over competitors.

Table 1
Digital marketing platforms

Digital Marketing Platforms	Explanation
Email Marketing	Digital Marketing that delivers messages to an audience through electronic mail
Online Advertising	Advertisements that are displayed on the internet
Affiliate Marketing	An online affiliate, markets products of an organisation and gets rewarded for referrals
Search Engine Marketing	Marketing that is related to searches on the internet
Pay per Click Advertising	An online advertising system whereby the advertiser pays for every click
Social Media Marketing	The creation, publication and sharing of content by individuals such as Blogs, Images and Videos on the social networks
Search Engine Optimization	Optimizing contents to appear first during web search
Content Marketing	Publishing shareable content in the form of blog posts, white papers, webinars etc.
Landing page Marketing	Displaying ad banners on any web page in which the visitors first land when they arrive at a website.
Smart phone Marketing	Marketing using free mobile applications
Viral Marketing	Creating posts, videos, memes or another short-form content type that spreads across the web like a virus.

3. Research methodology

Research is defined in terms of its aims. “The aim, as far as I can see, is the same in all sciences. Put simply and cursorily, the aim is to make known something previously unknown to human beings. It is to advance human knowledge, to make it more certain or better fitting. The aim is discovery.” defined by sociologist Norbert Elias.

A. Research method and data collection

1) Primary data

The following methods are used for data collection

- Questionnaire
- Interview – Discussion

2) Secondary data

The following was referred for collection of secondary data

- Books, Magazines and Journals
- Internet literatures

3) Research design

A Quantitative method of sample design was conducted with the help of a questionnaire with reference to a 100+ customers through personal interview and online medium.

Study was restricted to the traveler inflow to The Nilgiris, Tamilnadu.

4. Analysis and findings

All these findings and conclusions are basically drawn from the questionnaires which are filled by the respondents.

The results can be accessed via following

link: <https://www.esurveycreeator.com/results/80967a4-f2c520c>

Gender *

Number of participants: 100

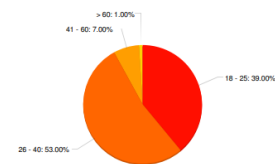
55 (55.0%): Male
 45 (45.0%): Female
 - (0.0%): Transgender



Age *

Number of participants: 100

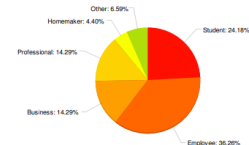
39 (39.0%): 18 - 25
 53 (53.0%): 26 - 40
 7 (7.0%): 41 - 60
 1 (1.0%): > 60



What is your occupation/profession? *

Number of participants: 91

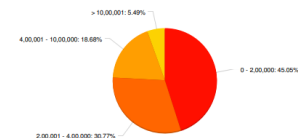
22 (24.2%): Student
 33 (36.3%): Employee
 13 (14.3%): Business
 13 (14.3%): Professional
 4 (4.4%): Homemaker
 6 (6.6%): Other
 Answer(s) from the additional field:
 - Employee of govt
 - Hotel Management
 - Use abroad
 - Rtd professor
 - Film maker
 - Film maker



What is your gross annual income? *

Number of participants: 91

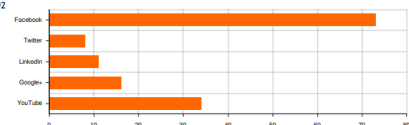
41 (45.1%): 0 - 2,00,000
 28 (30.8%): 2,00,001 - 4,00,000
 17 (18.7%): 4,00,001 - 10,00,000
 5 (5.5%): > 10,00,001



Which of the online community are you a member of? *

Number of participants: 92

73 (79.3%): Facebook
 8 (8.7%): Twitter
 11 (12.0%): LinkedIn
 16 (17.4%): Google+
 34 (37.0%): YouTube



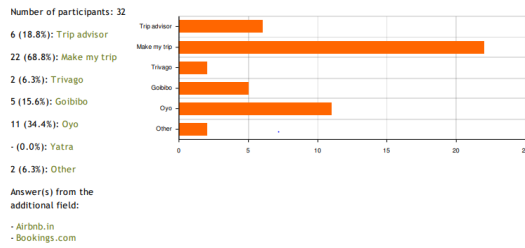
Have you ever used digital marketing platforms for Cottage accommodation bookings? *

Number of participants: 92

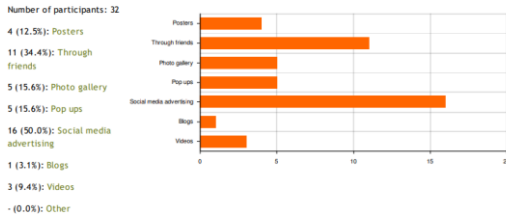
36 (39.1%): yes
 56 (60.9%): no



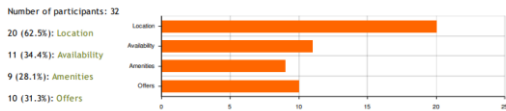
Which of the digital sites have you used to book cottage accommodations? *



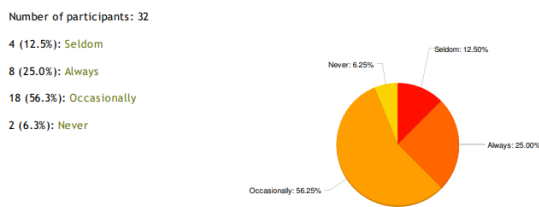
How did you know about the Cottage accommodation bookings in the digital marketing platforms? *



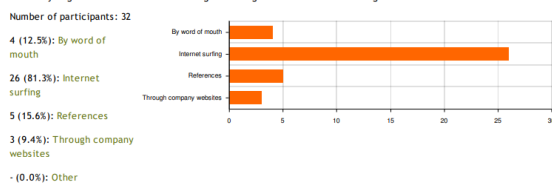
What is your preference based upon in digital cottage accommodation bookings? *



How often do you get promotional information of digital Cottage accommodation bookings? *



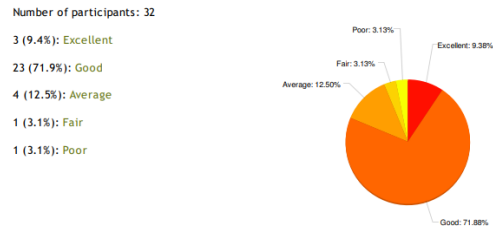
How did you get to know about offers in digital cottage accommodation bookings? *



Does using digital marketing platforms help communicate and give feedbacks or suggestions? *



How would you rate the use of digital marketing platform by Cottages in the Nilgiris? *



5. Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to get a general overview of digital marketing in accommodation sector with reference to home stay cottages, also the author wanted to get the idea of people about digital marketing and their booking satisfaction, in order to get the objectives quantitative research method was used. The overall goal of the study was to explain digital marketing and its satisfaction. The main reason of choosing this topic was because nowadays digital marketing plays a vital role to the company profit. Digital has become the main source of advertising for hospitality sector. Hotels, restaurant, airlines, travel agency all use digital marketing to communicate with their customers and attract more.

The survey result revealed the importance of digital marketing in the Accommodation sector-home stay cottages wherein the target group was the tourist and general people inflow to the Nilgiris, Tamilnadu for leisure and tourism. Most people prefer to plan their travel digital, they book tickets and reserved accommodation digital. Most of the participants agreed that digital platforms have met up their expectations, which was the main aim of the survey however it is suggested for a separate digital platform exclusively for the Home stay Cottages to be initiated in order to enhance this particular accommodation sector and ease the customer's task in preference. The author feels that the whole process was truly rewarding. The topic was interesting and was challenging at times, but the outcome is to the author's satisfaction. The material used for this report as well as the research results have expanded the author's knowledge, and can hopefully be beneficial in the future as the author has interest to do large sample study for research thesis related to accommodation sector in the future.

References

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