

## TO STUDY THE IMPACT OF REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTING AND STRENGTHENING THE BRAND VALUE OF THE HOTEL

**A. Ramgade and A. Kumar**

Dr. D. Y. Patil IHMCT, Maharashtra, India

Dr. D. Y. Patil B-School, Pune, Maharashtra, India

atul.ramgade@gmail.com, atul.kumar@dpu.edu.in

### ABSTRACT

*In today's competitive world, running any business is not an easy job; it is tough whether a manufacturing unit or a hotel. A hotel consists of many operational areas such as F&B Production and Service, Housekeeping, Front office and administration, which must be appropriately managed to achieve success, but today the business scenario has changed. Apart from working your operational areas, the authorities also need to think and take care of marketing, especially social media and online reviews. Social media plays a significant role; before booking any hotel, today's intelligent customers try to find out everything about the hotel online and on social media. Although a hotel may look physical, its image and reputation have become digital, which every hotelier needs to protect. i.e. it has become imperative to get right into today's digital age, which is a crucial thing to know about reputation management along with sales and marketing, this appearance could be a difference between a brand's success and failure. This research study tries to find out the importance of Reputation Management and how online reviews posted on various social media play a significant role and influence the Hotels' brand image.*

**Keywords:** Reputation Management, Brand, Social Media, Online Reviews

### Introduction

#### Understanding what is reputation management

A vital role of any industry is protecting their companies and organisations from public embarrassment and infamy. Today, every reputed business house and industry wants to micromanage everything from PR to communications to scandals. While running and managing a hotel, the owners need to regularly manage their hotel's reputation, which should be done without appointing and paying a fancy team of experts. Reputation management generally can be divided into two essential steps:

1. The first is to understand that what is being said about your hotel and its brand online
2. Then analysing it and Vigorously improving the reputation of your hotel

What this does is that it protects your hotels brand against crisis, which can happen unexpectedly at the same time; it also strengthens your hotels brand during good times.

#### Importance of reputation management for hotels

Today's world is flooded with information for the buyers in every industry; reviews, guides, and walk-through videos make the consumer's decisions easier to buy anything; this is one of

the most critical aspects of today's business. Managing reputation management has become crucial for most companies. Monitoring of internet and message control is a reputation management strategy that consists of a combination of comments and opinions about a particular hotel brand. This could be positive or negative. These messages related to the brands could pose a positive or negative impact on target customers. Today's platforms used for reputation management are social media sites, blog posts, and review sites; communication on these platforms influences customers' perceptions. The reviews could range from an apology or a poor service review, or a favourable story about the hotel. In the current scenario, the customer's voice has become a key factor for the success of reputation management today; online reviews have become the most important factor of every brand's strategy. The success of a business often depends upon how sound these reviews are managed.

When it comes to Reputation management, customers voice plays a vital role in its success, as the online review is all about observing and managing the internet and dealing with message control; this is done to monitor how a particular brand is being perceived online which, actively transfers positive messages across, this in return supports in forming a

positive perception amongst the target audiences. Because the customer's voice is key to the success of reputation management, and online review is the essence of all the brand's strategies, the success of reputation management depends upon how the staff is managing these reviews

In building the reputation of any organisation, the focus is mainly on social media sites, review sites, Wikipedia, blog posts, and various platforms dealing with the news. The perceptions of the customers are fundamental, and it is formed when the brand displays communication. This could be in the form of an apology about a poor service review to an advantageous update of any new product line.

Online reviews play a vital role to structure the reputation and building a loyal customer's base. The future beholds a significant expansion of social media and e-commerce overall, and it is going to grow exponentially in the future as well, considering this currently many brands have started to invest comprehensively in reputation management strategies, this will help to keep track of what people are saying about the hotel and positively respond to it online.

### **Currently, Reviews have become the norms**

In the current scenario, everyone's reviewing because today sites have made it easy to rate your opinions and experience about any hotel. These reviews have become an integral part of any purchase so good reviews can keep the hotel's reputation safe for many years. During previous years expert reviews were crucial, but today the complete scenario has changed. Before purchasing anything or booking a hotel, the customer's first checks the online reviews. Today, people read reviews and then secure the hotel. Currently, these reviews have become a big deal. In the past, customer loyalty was a buzzword the hoteliers used to depend on loyalty programs to attract and retain new customers. This is a past now, and as far as the present situation is concerned, it's all about the reputation because today's hoteliers need to keep their online reputation in tip-top condition to be ahead of their competitors, as there are so many choices available to the customers around also prospective customers won't delay in choosing a higher rated or cheaper alternative because with

social media it is straightforward to find hotels in most place.

### **Prioritize review sites**

Since online comments play a vital role in reputation management, hotels must take care of the review sites as they are of chief concern because customers make their choices based on these comments, which affects the reputation of the hotel, so the hotels must have a good amount of control over these sites.

### **Watch for negative reviews**

If a hotel has built up a good reputation in the market, it will obviously get a good star rating, but if there are negative reviews about the hotel, it could be harmful. So when a hotel receives a bad review, it's easy to find because it is fresh; the hotel must also keep a close lookout for these negative reviews and take quick action. The earlier the hotel finds them, the better is the chances of improving them.

The hotel management must also be ready with tools for managing their reputation, which could be the use of sophisticated software that is now readily available in the market. These tools will watch review sites for your organisation, after which they are ready to handle these negative comments which were posted.

### **Respond quickly to the bad ones**

An essential aspect of reputation management is to improve on the worst reviews that the hotel has received and to send a quick response because it is not a nice feeling when someone badly criticises a hotel in public and the whole staff of the hotel gets demoralised, here it is at most important for the management of the hotel to see, what could be done immediately to protect a brand's reputation. Today's customers want to feel that they are heard and attended, especially those who are angry with the hotel's services; the brand reputation experts say that the response time plays a crucial role in managing the organisation's reputation and so the reviews of the guests must be taken seriously, and complaints raised by them must be attended it could be related to a hotel's food, service, rooms and overall cleanliness or staff behaviour, the hotel should always prove to their guests that their feelings matter a lot to you. So

hotels must also take the advice of these customers to keep them happy. Another critical strategy of reputation management is to encourage the customers to leave reviews. If it is done respectfully, there are many chances that a hotel will get excellent and positive reviews, which is vital for today's business competition.

### **As with nearly everything in life, it's better to have a plan.**

The management of the hotel must plan for the following:

- Who is going to monitor the comments and reviews of the hotel
- The hotels will have to decide who will decide whether new comments require a response or not.
- Who is going to be responsible for delivering the response?
- The hotel needs to delegate this role to make the process very clear very clearly.

The hotels must also identify amongst them who will decide whether the comments and reviews require a response. After identifying them, the hotels need to set the kind of expectations for the words they can freely respond to and those that require the management's advice, especially the tough questions and nasty criticism for which the reputation management teams are not prepared. It's also important that this staff member has the freedom to speak on behalf of the hotel, especially while responding to negative feedback or harsh criticism; the management of the hotel needs to know that the person crafting these responses very well understands the vision and voice of your hotels brand and if the frontline staff isn't sure what to do, they need to know whom to approach. It could be their direct manager, someone in communications, or even the owner of the business.

### **Objectives Of The Study**

- To find out the importance of Reputation Management and its impact on the hospitality Industry.
- To analyse the measures taken by hotels to manage their online reputation.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Reputation management currently has become an enormous industry. It could be described as the process where the brand of any sector is controlled and improved. It also determines how others perceive brands, and so it is challenging for industry's to protect their image online, and hotels are not an exception to it. Reputation Management goes hand-in-hand with sales, marketing, Customer Relationship, and the success of a hotels brand depends on online reviews.

### **Reputation management Process**

Online reputation can be managed today with the help of hiring agency's who are experts in managing online comments. This can also be done with the use of software available today, and the following methods are carried out to manage online reputation by hotels.

### **Outdated and damaging content should be removed first from the source**

- The harmful content should be either weakened, pushed down or must be suppressed
- Positive reviews should be encouraged and added to media
- Search Engine Optimisation must be used appropriately
- The search results must be Improved
- Care must be taken to protect your reputation, be it personal or professional
- An essential aspect of reputation management is to monitor what people are saying about your hotel online continuously

Specific online comments are offensive, abusive, and harmful, or of an undesirable nature; these can damage the personal reputation of the hotel if it appears on search results. There is a provision to request Google under 'Right to Be Forgotten' to ask them to remove these. Offensive and damaging online content can damage a brand's reputation. There are also legal options available for the organisations if they come across any problems related to removing these harmful contents online.

### **Modern tools of Digital reputation management**

It is not a short-term approach to reputation management, as it requires time, patience, and the right digital tools. This requires Investments. Many software's are currently available in the market that takes care of the online reputation management that vigorously monitors and manages the online reputation for which assistance is taken through robust, intelligent systems.

### **Functions carried on by reputation management tools**

1. Integrating with social monitoring platforms from increasing the reach and discouraging the detractors
2. Manage all the reviews that are independent of various online review sites and that too at the click of a button to acquaint about views of people about the property
3. Powerful dashboards are made Accessible to check how efforts taken for brand reputation are performing off online.
4. Encourage and invite customers to provide online reviews and ask them to leave their feedback.
5. Quickly respond to reviews to turn around any negative thoughts into a positive outcome.
6. A considerable advantage of using a digital reputation management tool is to allow the marketing and sales team to adequately control their workflows and productivity with the help of a high degree of automation, intelligence and integrate it with other in-house tools.

While choosing the right reputation management software, the management of the hotel must listen to the voice of the customer as this may lead to success, and it must connect in a trusted, familiar way for genuineness and maintain credibility; proper time should be spent for looking at reputation management software and other solutions which will help in bridging the gap between brands and the customers.

### **Methods**

This study is based on the secondary source collected through books, Research Articles, Research Reports and websites.

### **Discussion**

Hotel reputation management is the practice of monitoring and influencing how a particular brand and property is being perceived throughout the web. A survey indicated that around 93% of the people believe that they depend upon online reviews while deciding which hotel to choose 53% of the people surveyed did not want to book a hotel that was missing online reviews. 87% of customers said they would prefer a hotel if they saw a negative or harsh comment online. 94% of people searching online said that they will not choose a hotel if they find a bad review of it online. Presently, it has become essential for the hotels to have a sound Reputation management system that will get along properly in today's digital age as this could be the difference between the success and failure of the brand because the reputation of any hotel is not built by accident. Still, it has come from online comments, reviews, and conversations between you and your customers; hoteliers must make sure that how a brand is presented, a good reputation management strategy can make a massive difference to a hotel's brand.

### **Conclusion**

The following are the keys to reputation management for the hotels

- Hotels must focus on review sites- More and more people rely on hotel sites before booking a hotel.
- Hotels must always keep an eye on social media.
- Hotels must respond quickly to negative comments- The management of the hotels must take all the online comments seriously, especially the negative comments. A 2-star review can be converted into three stars, which is a big win.
- Hotels must encourage positive feedback. Hotels must encourage customers to post positive comments and say nice things about their organisation. This can be done on social media and major review sites.

Establishing a reputation management action plan is not easy; hotels must train their staff and use the tools for their ease. Hotels must be concerned about their brand's reputation because they have worked hard to maintain their brand's image; it is essential to manage the hotel's reputation. As a part of the reputation management strategy, many customers understand that the issues and problems cannot be solved immediately. Still, they expect that someone is listening to them and doing their best to solve their complaints. Today, with everything being technology and artificial intelligence-driven, customers expect to respond to their comments from an actual human being, not a robot. When this happens, they feel that they're taken

seriously, a correct approach will create an opportunity to build a good rapport with customers, improve the services and products, and leave a good and lasting impression on your customers as reputation management doesn't happen by chance, it is essential to monitor what people say about a hotel at the same time, actively encouraging them to enhance positive discussions. Finally, managing a brand's reputation has become a critical business focus for hotels today; considering this, the management of the hotels should invest time, arrange for the right tools, and implement the plans to ensure that they are being presented correctly online, the result of this effort will bring good reputation to the hotels brand which could be the key to the success of any organisation.

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