

## **Online Reputation Management Strategies in Hospitality Industry: A Cross-Sectional Study**

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### **Abstract**

In an era of digital advancement, hospitality business and its positive growth undoubtedly depends on the effective online reputation management skills and strategies implemented by these industries beyond the borders. Since people are connected and exposed to diverse knowledge as part of globalization and technological boom, any industry can survive only with proper communication with customers, which also plays major role in building trust as well as in creating a confident picture of the industry. The quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted over several hotels, resorts and various other hospitality industries reveal the significance of constant engagement with the customers in bringing success to these establishments. The data collected ensure that proactive communication, timely responses, proper feedbacks both to positive and negative reviews, constant customer engagement and transparency are the prerequisite functions in shaping online reputation management system. On the other hand, it is only through these strategies one can ensure maximum visibility to the customers as well as confirm positive growth of hospitality industry. This cross-sectional study examines various hospitality establishments, analyzing their online reputation strategies to provide valuable insights on how to further and develop the same, thereby expanding the scope of innovativeness in adopting diverse ORM strategies and skills.

**Keywords:** Online reputation management, hospitality, efficiency, customers, employees

### **Introduction**

The cotemporary times are marked by digital platforms and technological advancement. In an era as such online reputation has become a significant matter of concern in order to ensure the success and growth of hospitality industry, thereby marking the need to improve effective online reputation management strategies to implement the same. There has been immense growth in the

number of online platforms that bring forward innovativeness in allowing the customer's and people to engage each other as well express their views and opinions on various things. These platforms also allow the customers to develop themselves in the knowledge about various products and services across the globe. Thus, with intense exposure as such, it is necessary to make sure proactive and timely engagement systems are structured along with efficient online reputation management strategies in order to make certain the positive outgrowth of any industry.

When it comes to hospitality industry that encompasses hotels, resorts and various services as such, the online reputation management system requires a special attention. These are the industries that heavily depends upon the customer satisfaction and responses in their growth and betterment. The technological boom and rise of internet platforms have allowed customers to express their satisfaction and opinions very easily these days which have a direct impact and influence on potential guests. Like the study conducted by Avant (2013) points out, the responses and engagement to these reviews of customers, particularly negative ones have severe role in enhancing the impression and shaping a perspective about the service of the hospitality industry.

The empirical studies on various hospitality industry reflect the importance of online reputation management strategies in implementing their success and development. Many of these studies convey how the modern customers increasingly depend on online ratings and reviews to decide their choice of any service. Chen (2013) in the research exposes how successful industry always opted for customized strategies to improve their ratings and confirm positive online responses in their efforts to succeed the organization. Thus, effective online reputation management strategies are the key to direct the reviews of customers and also to ensure that they give best ratings to the service provided.

In improving the online reputation management structure, the key elements include effective monitoring of the online platforms, sorting customer's reviews, consistently engaging to their queries and responses, particularly to the negative ones as well as strategically placing the very brand of the industry in the digital space. Apart from these there are several other methods to ensure the efficiency of this area, pertaining to the fact that technology innovates each and every day creating new challenges and building new scope to develop. In order to successfully run any industry in such a digital age, particularly a hospitality industry, the firm must strictly succumb to evolving and latest online reputation management strategies that ranges from customized

interaction, consistent, proactive and timely response to effective crisis management as well as consistent customer engagement. All of these measures help improve the customer interaction with the industry there by furthering the growth and attracting more people to approach for the services that are being provided.

### **Literature Review**

In contemporary times of growing digital platforms and technological advancement, customer-generated content has immense importance in creating positive image of any industry as well as in enhancing success of the same. Therefore, implementation of effective online reputation management strategies plays a key role in the growth and development of hospitality industries, as they ensure a platform to engage and build trust with the customers around. The literature review provides insights on diverse online reputation management methods implemented by various hospitality establishments in improving their status and betterment. Analyzing these methods provide scope to further extend the ways to improve ORM strategies as it allows to dissect and explore the already existing methods and help develop them according to the ever-evolving nature of technology.

The research study conducted by Avant (2013) look upon the responses of hotel management staff to the comments of customers and analyzes these responses to comprehend how significant impact it creates upon the guest satisfaction as well as influence the decision of guests in choosing the hotel, deciding the time duration of stay etc. Avant, in the study claims that rather than the engagement of customers in writing reviews about the hotels, the responses of the hotel staff to these reviews especially negative comments play a major role in creating positive image of the hotel industry. Becker and fellow authors (2013) study about the necessity to monitor social networks as they exemplify how a single voice of negative comment has drastic affect in creating picture of the quality of service provided, where such messages reach immense audience these days with the advancement of digital platforms. Their research points out the need to have an integrated model system to facilitate, monitor and improve the social networking style to confirm proper and transparent customer engagement.

Chen (2013) researches about various factors that influence the growth of international hotels and points out the difference in methods that improve the internal service quality of these hotels. The

study counts on recent increase in the number of successful hotels and relate it to the customized strategies they implement at their business. Khalifa and fellow researcher (2013) as part of their research signifies the importance of proper hotel reputation management and links it to international customers pointing out its role in building global perspective about the hotel and its service. The explorative and quantitative nature of the study further establishes the necessity to adopt methods that ensure customized, timely and transparent engagement with the customers since data from various hospitality establishments prove how online reviews often emerges as the benchmark in deciding performance of a hotel and quality of the service provided.

Levy and fellow authors' research (2013) analyses around 1946 online reviews that rate one star, particularly in their attempt to understand the necessity to give immense significance to poor or damaging reviews in the procedure of improving online reputation of the hotel. Their study addresses a network of common problems that arise in relation to hospitality industry and categorize it around issues on cleanliness as well as engagement from staffs. The research emphasizes the need to respond online with the emerging social media platforms engaging in every aspect of day-to-day life, pointing out that it does not matter necessarily if there is proper response publicly but no efficient engagement online. Marchiori and fellow researchers (2010) also points out the same putting forward the significance of organizing and managing the web to make sure the reputation of the industry online, there by increasing its success. In this particular study, the authors focus on the tourism industry as well as engage in creating a primary model that functions to improve the reputation of the industry.

Novikova (2009) conducted a study to explore and understand the customer employ satisfaction by collecting data from around 267 customers. This data that has been collected as part of a ten-minute telephone interview by a collecting agency helped analyze the factors that made the customers very happy as well as the factors that dissatisfied them. This study puts forward a scope to find out ways to improve the comfort of the customers, increase efficiency and engagement of employees as well as aids to develop the overall reputation of the hospitality industry.

Seebach (2013), on the study conducted shares the importance of corporate reputation and the need to manage it effectively. In this attempt, the study explains the role of social media in sensing reputational threats immediately and managing it in short span of time. The empirical studies conducted show that IT system have a significant position in improving the firms to better the

conditions of online reputation of hospitality industry. Similarly, Worden's (2011) research also exposes how no response to remarks or denial to the customer reports affect the corporate reputation in the most negative manner. The research further provides inputs on how each company can ensure various measures to better the engagement system and network in a positive manner to ensure timely response to insights provided by customers.

Xin (2013) proposes a feedback-based management system that allows to understand the customer's responses in a comprehensive manner such that proper further inputs and insights can be shared to the industry to increase its engagement efficiency. In this feedback-based network, Xin also suggests to evaluate the previous consumers association with the industry to prospect the changes that the industry have taken as well as to analyze how it has affected the overall progress of the same. Xiong and King (2013) on the other hand emphasizes the need to shift the perspective towards employees creating an employee brand and to understand how better working system can be ensured for them in collective. All of these studies undoubtedly point the significance of online platforms in improving the reputation of the hospitality industry and furthers that such an effective online management system can be structured only with continuous network between customers and employees.

### **Objective**

To investigate the online reputation management strategies in hospitality industry

### **Methodology**

This research is a descriptive type that collected data from 179 participants, including individuals who have stayed at hotels within the target market and customers who have left reviews on popular platforms such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, or Google Reviews. The data were analyzed using a checklist question, which required respondents to answer with either a "Yes" or a "No" for each question.

## Data Analysis and Interpretations:

**Table 1 Online Reputation Management Strategies in Hospitality Industry**

SL No.	Online Reputation Management Strategies in Hospitality Industry	Yes	% Yes	No	% No	Total
1	Regularly monitor review sites, social media platforms, and online travel agencies for customer feedback and reviews about your establishment.	149	83.24	30	16.76	179
2	Engage with your customers by responding to both positive and negative reviews.	163	91.06	16	8.94	179
3	Positive reviews act as social proof and can influence potential customers' decisions.	165	92.18	14	7.82	179
4	Satisfied customers are more likely to leave positive reviews and recommend your establishment to others.	144	80.45	35	19.55	179
5	Consider using a review management system or software to streamline the process of monitoring and responding to reviews.	157	87.71	22	12.29	179
6	Maintain an active presence on social media platforms relevant to your establishment.	132	73.74	47	26.26	179
7	Ensure your website and online listings provide accurate and up-to-date information about your establishment.	153	85.47	26	14.53	179
8	Provide contact information or a dedicated customer service email where	129	72.07	50	27.93	179

	guests can reach out to discuss their concerns privately.					
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Table 1 shows the online reputation management strategies in hospitality industry. It was found that around 92.1% respondents accept that positive reviews act as social proof and can influence potential customers' decisions. Additionally, engage with your customers by responding to both positive and negative reviews (91.0%). Moreover, consider using a review management system or software to streamline the process of monitoring and responding to reviews (87.7%). Ensure your website and online listings provide accurate and up-to-date information about your establishment (85.4%). Furthermore, regularly monitor review sites, social media platforms, and online travel agencies for customer feedback and reviews about your establishment (83.2%). In addition, satisfied customers are more likely to leave positive reviews and recommend your establishment to others (80.4%). However, Maintain an active presence on social media platforms relevant to your establishment (73.7%). Lastly, provide contact information or a dedicated customer service email where guests can reach out to discuss their concerns privately (72.0%).

### **Conclusion**

Online reputation management strategies have become significant for the success and advancement of hospitality industry pertaining to the digital age that we all are living currently. Effective strategies are required to maintain the online reputation since this has a direct role in influencing and impacting the potential guests as well as in creating the positive impression about the industry. The study above intends to explore various methods of innovativeness that help improve the success of hospitality industry by addressing the key roles of online reputation strategies in the same. Proactive monitoring, timely response, persistent customer engagement particularly in addressing negative response, leveraging online platforms, customizing experiences, effective crisis management are some of the steps that can be taken in implementing an adequate structure of online reputation management network. However, this network requires persistent communication in between customers and employees to ensure proper facilitation of the strategies and inputs. The study extends the scope to understand and analyze the same with respect to the ever-evolving innovativeness associated with the digital era and its facilities.

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