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The Impact of Social Media and Online Reviews on Hotel Reputation and Guest Decision-Making

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ABSTRACT

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The article explores the role of social media and online reviews in shaping a hotel's reputation and how these factors influence consumer decision-making in the hospitality industry. The study aims to identify how digital communication channels, particularly social media and customer reviews, affect brand perception, trust, and behavioral responses of potential guests. The research employed general scientific methods of cognition, including analysis, synthesis, generalization, classification, systematization, observation, comparison, and modeling. The study concludes that effective review management involves not only monitoring and responding to negative comments but also actively encouraging positive feedback, analyzing common complaints, and using insights to improve services. It is found that the level of detail and perceived credibility of reviews significantly enhances their influence on the audience. The importance of visualized forms of digital reputation – such as ratings on Booking.com, TripAdvisor, and Google Reviews – is highlighted, as they serve as a form of "social proof" of service quality. It is noted that even a single unanswered negative review can significantly reduce potential customer trust. The article analyzes relevant digital strategies used by hotels, including content marketing, SMM promotion, influencer marketing, email campaigns, chatbot implementation, customer behavior analytics, and feedback automation. The study concludes that a comprehensive use of these tools, combined with flexibility and openness to communication, enables hotels not only to maintain a positive reputation but also to build a loyal online community, increase booking rates, and gain long-term competitive advantage. The practical value of the study lies in the development of recommendations for effective digital reputation management as a tool for enhancing service quality, increasing customer trust, and strengthening market positioning.

KEYWORDS

digital marketing, social media, online reviews, hotel reputation, consumer behavior.



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Вплив соціальних мереж та онлайн-відгуків на репутацію готелю та рішення гостей

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СТАТТЯ

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню ролі соціальних мереж і онлайн-відгуків у формуванні репутації готелю та впливу цих факторів на процес прийняття рішень споживачами в індустрії гостинності. Мета дослідження – з'ясувати, яким чином цифрові канали комунікації, зокрема соціальні медіа та онлайн-рецензії клієнтів, впливають на сприйняття бренду готелю, рівень довіри до нього та поведінкові реакції потенційних гостей. У ході наукового дослідження використовувалися загальнонаукові методи пізнання: аналіз, синтез, узагальнення, класифікація, систематизація, спостереження, порівняння та моделювання. Результати дослідження показують, що соціальні мережі стали стратегічним інструментом комунікації готелів із цільовою аудиторією, формування позитивного іміджу та управління репутаційними ризиками. У дослідженні зроблено висновок, що ефективне управління відгуками – це не лише моніторинг і реакція на негатив, а й активне стимулювання позитивних коментарів, аналітика типових зауважень, використання фідбеку для покращення сервісу. З'ясовано, що рівень деталізації та авторитетність відгуків підвищують їх вплив на аудиторію. Зроблено акцент на важливості візуалізованих форм цифрової репутації – рейтингах на Booking.com, TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, які слугують своєрідним “соціальним доказом” якості послуг. Визначено, що навіть одна негативна рецензія без відповіді може значно знизити рівень довіри потенційного клієнта. У статті досліджено актуальні цифрові стратегії готелів, серед яких: контент-маркетинг, SMM-просування, інфлюенсер-маркетинг, e-mail-кампанії, використання чат-ботів, аналітика поведінки клієнтів та автоматизація зворотного зв'язку. Зроблено висновок, що комплексне використання цих інструментів у поєднанні з гнучкістю та відкритістю до комунікації дозволяє готелям не лише підтримувати позитивну репутацію, а й формувати лояльну онлайн-спільноту, підвищувати рівень бронювань та довготривалу конкурентну перевагу. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у розробці рекомендацій щодо ефективного управління цифровою репутацією готелів як інструменту покращення сервісу, підвищення довіри клієнтів та зміцнення ринкових позицій.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

цифровий маркетинг, соціальні мережі, онлайн-відгуки, репутація готелю, поведінка споживачів.

1. Introduction

In the current conditions of digitalization of society, social networks and online reviews have acquired the status of key factors in the formation of the reputation of hotel enterprises. Information technology has radically changed the way business and consumers interact, turning the digital space into the main arena of marketing communications. Hotels that previously relied on traditional promotion channels are now actively integrating social media tools into their strategies, as this is where public opinion, trust and customer loyalty are formed. Social platforms have become a universal environment for brand promotion, reputation management, collecting feedback, and building an emotional connection with guests, which significantly increases the competitiveness of the establishment.

At the same time, the phenomenon of online feedback has significantly affected consumer decision-making mechanisms. Today's customers focus not only on official advertising, but primarily on the experience of other users, which is reflected in digital reviews. Thus, online reputation management has evolved into a strategic tool for the development of the hotel business, which covers monitoring, analysis, and responding to real-time reviews. In the context of high market competition, it is effective digital communication, combined with quality service and professional work in social networks, that determines the level of customer trust and influences their final choice when booking a hotel.

2. Literature Review

The issue of the influence of social networks and online reviews on the reputation of the hotel and the decisions of guests is sufficiently researched in domestic and foreign scientific literature. However, despite the relevance of the topic, the vast majority of developments are still concentrated in the domestic scientific space, although there are also high-quality foreign studies.

A significant contribution to the study of the role of social media was made by such authors as R. V. Diachenko and O. H. Tonkykh, who emphasize the effectiveness of social platforms as a tool for promoting hotel services and emphasize that the interactivity of these communication channels increases consumer confidence [2]. This thesis is supplemented by I. Ya. Mendela and I. B. Rumiantseva, emphasizing that social media act not only as an advertising tool, but also as a platform for building customer loyalty [7].

A significant contribution to the study of the impact of online reviews is made by foreign researchers. M. Arzaghi, I. H. Genc, and S. Naik compare official hotel ratings with real consumer reviews, finding that it is reviews that are crucial for potential guests [1]. In turn, R. Du and M. M. He carried out an empirical analysis of the characteristics of reviews, finding that detailed, constructive, and emotionally colored messages significantly increase the usefulness and credibility of the hotel [3].

Domestic researchers H. M. Volianyk and N. S. Marushko focus on marketing strategies for retaining customers, among which an important place is occupied by working with online reviews [10], and L. O. Horshkova emphasizes the formation of a positive image as a factor of competitiveness [4]. In addition, L. Turchyn and V. Ostroverkhov consider modern trends in Internet marketing, which are the foundation for building an effective digital presence of hotels [8].

Expert literature was also used for the study – publications of modern online resources, such as Hotel-solution.com.ua, which consider the impact of reviews on the success of the hotel business and methods of attracting customers through digital channels [5; 6].

Despite the sufficient amount of literature on this topic, there is a lack of systematized material, and therefore, using various methods of scientific knowledge, information was analyzed, grouped, systematized and presented in the light of the research topic.

3. Problem Statement

The purpose of the article is to investigate the impact of social networks and online reviews on the formation of the hotel's reputation and the decision-making process by customers. To achieve this goal, the following tasks will be performed: to analyze the role of social networks in the formation of the image and trust in the hotel; to reveal the importance of online reviews as a tool of reputation

management; to identify the main strategies of digital communication of hotels to increase their attendance and competitiveness.

4. Methods and Materials

In the course of scientific research, general scientific methods of cognition were used: analysis, synthesis, generalization, classification, systematization, observation, comparison and modeling.

5. Results and Discussion

Digital marketing in the hotel business is developing rapidly, and the success of a hotel today is determined by its flexibility, adaptation to modern trends, and the ability to conduct a dialogue with customers in the online space [7].

Social networks have become an integral part of business communications in the hotel industry. They act as a one-stop platform for interacting with customers, building a brand image, and managing reputation. For hotels, social media is not just a means of advertising, but a space where public opinion, trust and loyalty of guests are formed. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok allow establishments to actively communicate with consumers, present their services, share guest impressions, and at the same time track the audience's reaction in real time. The effectiveness of such tools in modern conditions prevails over traditional means of advertising, because it is Internet communications that today are the main channel of influencing the decisions of potential customers [7].

Today, marketing technologies in the hotel business are dynamically evolving, reflecting the overall digital transformation of the industry. The 2025 trends in hospitality marketing are mobile marketing, video marketing, influencer marketing, chatbots and instant messengers, content marketing, social content, and user collaboration [8]. Let us consider these trends in more detail in Table 1.

Table 1. Current trends in marketing for hotels

Trend	Brief description	Impact on the hotel business
Mobile Marketing	Targeting websites, apps and advertising campaigns to smartphone and tablet users	Increased convenience, speed of booking and mobile customer interaction
Video Marketing	Using short videos to present services, interiors, customer reviews	Attracting the attention of potential guests, improving brand awareness and emotional connection
Influencer Marketing	Cooperation with bloggers, travel opinion leaders and content creators	Growing trust, expanding audience reach, and increasing conversions
Chatbots and messengers	Using chatbots and messengers to communicate, book and provide information	Effective customer support 24/7, reducing staff workload
AI Marketing	Application of artificial intelligence to analyze guest behavior, forecast demand, and automate marketing messages	Optimizing advertising strategies, personalizing the guest experience, and reducing costs
Content Marketing	Regular creation of high-quality, useful and relevant content (articles, blogs, guides)	Building brand expertise, increasing customer trust and loyalty
Social content and collaborative creativity	Engaging users to create photos, videos, testimonials, and stories about your stay	Strengthening brand authenticity, increasing trust and emotional engagement
Personalized marketing	Segmentation of guests according to behavioral, socio-demographic and psychological criteria; Creation of individual offers and packages	Increased customer satisfaction, increased repeat bookings, and average revenue per guest
Voice Search & Local SEO	Content optimization for voice queries and local search engines (Google Voice, Google Maps, local keywords)	Increasing the hotel's visibility in local searches, attracting guests looking for accommodation nearby

Source: Systematized by the authors according to the data given in [8].

The influence of social networks on the reputation of hotels is due to their special properties. Within the network, an environment is formed where each user can act as an agent of influence – to spread his own opinion, assessment or recommendation. At the same time, there is an effect of opinion leaders, when the influence of individual users with a large audience can significantly increase or, conversely, reduce trust in the brand. Social networks are also characterized by the phenomenon of

clustering – the unification of users by common interests, which increases the speed of information dissemination. On the other hand, the high number of connections in the network makes the system vulnerable to negative feedback that can spread like an avalanche in the online space. That is why digital reputation management is becoming a strategically important component of the hotel's marketing policy [7].

Modern hotels are actively using social media to increase their brand visibility, attract customers, and drive sales. One of the easiest but effective ways is to create official pages on popular networks. Through such platforms, hotels share photos of rooms, interiors, events, special offers, and seasonal promotions. Video content helps to show the atmosphere of the establishment, and posts with feedback form a sense of openness and care for guests. In addition, social media has become a powerful tool for advertising events – from corporate meetings to gastronomic festivals – which creates additional touchpoints with potential attendees [9].

Special attention should be paid to interaction with customers through social networks. The modern user expects a quick response, a personalized approach, and constant contact. Hotels that respond promptly to comments, questions, or complaints create a sense of trust and respect among customers. Social networks allow you not only to communicate, but also to collect valuable feedback, which is used to improve the service. Many establishments organize interactive contests or surveys, which contribute to the formation of an active community around the brand [7].

Building a positive image of a hotel on the Internet requires compliance with certain rules. First of all, it is worth systematically monitoring reviews about the institution on specialized resources and on social networks. It is important to maintain high activity, encourage satisfied guests to leave comments and participate in communication. Reviews must be analyzed, used in advertising materials and demonstrated readiness to respond to comments. An effective online reputation cannot be random – it requires constant attention, analytics and a strategic approach to communication [4].

The role of social networks in the choice of a hotel by customers is growing every year. More and more consumers are looking for information not through official websites, but on social platforms or on recommendation services such as Booking and TripAdvisor. It is here that the first impression of the quality of services and the level of trust in the brand is formed. For a modern client, the experience of other users is no less important than official advertising. In this regard, hotels are forced to adapt their communication strategies to new conditions, be more open, interactive, and quickly respond to the expectations of the online community [2].

The marketing potential of social networks in the hotel industry is almost limitless. Researchers note that the platforms Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, TikTok demonstrate the greatest efficiency. Through them, hotels can promote services, create brand communities, develop personal branding, and conduct reputation management. The introduction of modern SMM strategies allows not only to increase the recognition of the institution, but also to form long-term emotional ties with customers, which is the basis for sustainable business development [2].

Online reviews today are an integral element of hotel reputation management, because they form customer trust and significantly influence their booking decisions. In the face of growing competition in the hotel industry, it is the opinions of guests that become the decisive factor in the choice. Reviews perform several functions at once: they confirm the quality of service, act as an indicator of customer satisfaction and create an information field that forms the image of the institution in the digital environment. Positive comments help hotels attract new customers and increase the level of trust, while constructive criticism serves as a source for improving the service. That is why review management has become a strategically important component of the marketing policy of each hotel [6].

Guest reviews are important not only for creating an image, but also for the development of the hotel's internal processes. Each comment reflects the real experience of the client – the level of cleanliness of the rooms, the quality of food, the speed of service, the competence of the staff, etc. Their analysis allows the hotel management to quickly identify weaknesses, raise service standards and form a culture of continuous improvement. Moreover, reviews act as a free marketing tool: they are distributed through social networks, booking sites and recommendation platforms, influencing thousands of potential customers. Thus, online reviews become not just an element of communication, but an important resource for strategic reputation management [6].

The usefulness of online reviews depends on several key factors – the quality of the content, the credibility of the author, and the perception of the audience. According to research, reviews that are

detailed, reasoned, and published by users with a certain authority or history of activity have the greatest impact. The more specifically described the impressions, the higher the credibility of such a comment. At the same time, the perceived value of a review is determined by how much it helps a potential guest reduce uncertainty when making a choice. Reviews play an important role in choosing a hotel [3]. Let's take a closer look at the importance of positive reviews for hotel booking decisions in Table 2.

Table 2. The importance of reviews for hotel booking decisions

The meaning of reviews	Importance for booking
Confirmation of quality of service	Helps to build trust in the hotel and reduce the risk of bad choices
Customer satisfaction score	Serves as an indicator of the level of comfort, service and overall experience of guests
Formation of the image of the institution in the digital environment	Determines the hotel's reputation in the market, influencing the perception of potential customers
Source of service improvement	Allows you to identify weaknesses and improve service standards
Free Marketing Tool	Disseminates positive information through online platforms, attracting new guests
A means of reducing uncertainty when choosing	Helps potential customers make rational decisions based on the real experience of others
Mechanism of strategic reputation management	It is an important element of competitive advantage in conditions of high market competition

Source: Systematized by the authors on the basis of sources [6; 8].

Thus, well-structured and meaningful reviews from real customers become an effective mechanism for transmitting information about the quality of services and help other users make informed decisions [3].

Research shows that more than 80% of users check reviews before booking a hotel, and even one negative, unanswered review can significantly influence the decisions of potential guests. Therefore, hotels should consider each review as a communication opportunity – to thank, explain, apologize or offer a solution. This approach builds a reputation as an open and professional brand, and positive reviews become the best free advertising [5].

Effective review management involves a systematic approach to collecting feedback. The most common strategies are to survey guests after their stay, encourage them to leave comments on popular online platforms (TripAdvisor, Google, Booking.com), and use social media as a channel of interaction. Hotels are increasingly implementing mobile applications with the function of collecting feedback or offering to leave feedback directly on the spot – through tablets or QR codes. Staff can personally ask guests to rate the service, and automated collection systems help to centrally process the information received. Loyalty programs become an important incentive – discounts, bonuses or special offers for those who leave comments. All this contributes to the formation of a culture of constant dialogue between the hotel and customers [6].

Let's consider the approaches to the hotel with reviews on social networks in Table 3.

Negative reviews, although they can create reputational risks, are at the same time a valuable source of information for improving the service. The most important thing is a prompt response to criticism – a quick, polite and professional response demonstrates openness and care for the client. Acknowledging the problem, apologizing and offering a specific solution increase the level of trust in the brand. Many hotels use negative reviews as a basis for internal analysis and staff training. Open communication in response to criticism often makes a more positive impression on potential guests than even impeccable ratings. Thus, competent management of negative comments can turn a reputational challenge into a tool for improving the quality of services and strengthening the image of the institution [6].

In today's competitive environment, a hotel cannot be limited to advertising – it must constantly communicate with customers, share relevant content, maintain feedback and work with a reputation in the online space. Digital marketing strategies cover SEO optimization, content marketing, email campaigns, SMM promotion, and influencer marketing. They allow hotels not only to attract new customers, but also to maintain the loyalty of those who have already used the services [10]. Let's look at these online strategies in Table 4.

Table 3. The hotel's work with reviews on social networks

Direction of activity	Main actions	Expected result
Monitor reviews	Systematic tracking of comments and ratings on Facebook, Google, Booking, Instagram and other platforms	Timely response to problems, maintaining a positive image and reputation control
Working with negative reviews	Prompt, courteous and public response to complaints; suggestion of ways to resolve conflict situations	Reducing the impact of negativity, restoring customer trust, and increasing satisfaction levels
Maintaining positive reviews	Thanking guests, republishing or quoting positive comments on social networks, using them in marketing materials	Strengthening brand credibility, forming social proof of service quality
Motivation to leave reviews	Rewarding guests through bonuses, promo codes, QR codes in rooms, and post-check-out surveys	Increasing the number of reviews, increasing the rating of the hotel on online platforms
Analysis of review content	Identifying recurring remarks, key issues, and positive trends in feedback; Assessing the level of guest satisfaction	Improving the quality of service, optimizing service delivery processes
Communication openness	Public demonstration of the hotel's willingness to listen to customers, accept comments and make changes	Formation of the hotel's image as a customer-oriented, socially responsible brand
Management response to feedback by managers	Analysis of comments and recommendations, preparation of management decisions based on identified problems; development of instructions and recommendations for hotel staff and departments	Improving the quality of service, improving management processes, increasing the efficiency of the team

Source: Systematized by the authors on the basis of the sources [5; 6].

Table 4. Online strategies to boost hotel marketing

Strategy name	Purpose of implementation	Expected result
SMM promotion	Building brand awareness and audience engagement	Growth in coverage, number of bookings
Influencer and UGC marketing	Building trust through authentic content	Reputation Building, Loyalty Growth
Personalization and analytics	Optimization of communications and budgets	Improve targeting performance
Reputation management	Increasing customer trust	Rating growth, increased bookings
AI and digital tools	Automation and service improvement	Increase reaction speed, improve guest experience
Email Marketing	Support for repeat sales	Growth in the share of regular customers

Source: Summarized by the authors based on the source [10].

An important element of modern digital hotel marketing strategies is the system of star ratings and ratings on online platforms, which acts as an indicator of the quality of services and a powerful factor of influence on consumer behavior. High ratings on Booking.com, TripAdvisor, or Google Reviews increase the trust of potential customers and directly correlate with the level of bookings. This form of visualized reputation creates a social proof effect, in which users focus on the experience of other consumers, reducing the level of uncertainty when making a decision. For hotels, this means the need to systematically manage reviews and actively work to increase the average rating by improving service, personalizing service and responding effectively to criticism. Thus, the star rating system becomes not only a feedback mechanism, but also a tool for strategic positioning in a competitive digital environment [1].

6. Conclusions

Social media has become a central element in building the reputation of hotels and affects the decision-making process of customers. They act as a two-way communication channel that allows hotels not only to inform consumers about services, but also to actively interact with them. Through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, or LinkedIn, establishments get the opportunity to form a positive brand image, demonstrate the uniqueness of their service, and promptly respond to audience requests. Social networks have become a mechanism for creating trust and loyalty, and their

interactivity contributes to the spread of positive guest experiences, which is an important competitive advantage in today's hotel services market.

Online reviews are a critical factor in building customer trust and managing a hotel's reputation. In the digital environment, it is reviews from real guests that are the main source of social proof of the quality of services. Positive comments increase the attractiveness of the institution, while constructive criticism serves as the basis for improving the service. Research shows that most consumers check reviews before booking, so responding to reviews quickly, openly, and professionally increases brand credibility. Thus, online reviews simultaneously perform the functions of a marketing tool, an indicator of customer satisfaction and a means of strategic reputation management.

To ensure stable competitiveness, hotels must systematically implement digital strategies aimed at increasing customer awareness and loyalty. Among the most effective approaches are SMM promotion, cooperation with influencers, personalization of communications, and active reputation management. A special role is played by working with feedback – prompt response, content analysis and encouraging users to interact. The use of artificial intelligence tools, mobile applications, and analytics systems allows you to optimize these processes. As a result, a hotel that consistently develops an online presence and maintains an open dialogue with customers not only strengthens its reputation but also increases the level of attendance and financial stability in the long run.

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