

CHAPTER-4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Research methodology is a systematic and structured framework that guides the process of conducting research. It encompasses the strategies, techniques, and procedures employed by researchers to design, collect, analyse, and interpret data for a specific research study. A well-defined research methodology is essential because it ensures that the research is conducted in a systematic and organized manner, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings. In research methodology, researchers make critical decisions about the type of research to be conducted, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. They define the target population, select appropriate sampling methods, and establish ethical considerations to protect participants' rights and ensure the research's integrity. Additionally, the methodology addresses issues of validity and reliability, which are fundamental to the credibility of research outcomes. Moreover, the research methodology outlines the timeline and required resources for the study, allowing for efficient project management. It acknowledges potential limitations, providing transparency about the constraints and challenges faced during the research process. Ultimately, a well-structured research methodology is the backbone of any research endeavour. It serves as a roadmap that guides researchers from the inception of a research idea to the generation of meaningful conclusions, making the research process more organized, replicable, and credible.

3.1 Introduction:

In recent times, the hotel industry has adopted social media marketing strategies as an integral part of its marketing campaigns to enhance brand recognition. Social media platforms have become the primary channels through which hotels promote themselves and engage with their clientele. The core objective of this research is to identify the most effective social media platforms for the hotel industry, with a focus on harnessing their potential to the fullest extent. The study aims to shed light on the prevailing social media handles that hotels commonly employ to maximize audience engagement. Furthermore, it emphasizes the pivotal role of social media platforms as potent communication tools, seamlessly integrated into the hotels' overarching brand marketing strategies.

The exponential growth of internet users over the last decade has significantly expanded the use of social media, transcending from individual users to businesses. This paradigm shift is particularly evident in organizations operating in the service sector, such as hospitality. Many such enterprises have transitioned from traditional marketing practices to embrace this contemporary and interactive medium. Within this context, the paper examines the transformative impact of various social media channels on consumer behaviour, particularly in terms of their decision-making processes and brand loyalty.

Social media, rooted in computer-based technology, facilitates the exchange of ideas and information through the creation of virtual networks and communities. It forms an integral component of digital marketing, encompassing advertising via digital channels like search engines, websites, social media platforms, email, and mobile applications. In today's digital age, consumers heavily rely on digital platforms to conduct product research, underscoring the critical importance of social media marketing for businesses. Commonly employed social media tools within the hospitality sector include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. This research holds significant value for academicians specializing in the fields of hospitality, tourism, and social media marketing.

Social media provides an invaluable platform for businesses, irrespective of their scale, to establish and fortify their brand presence. Marketers universally recognize the pivotal role of social media in brand building, with a primary focus on enhancing brand awareness. By establishing a robust brand presence on social media platforms, businesses can effectively expand their reach to a broader and more diverse audience, thereby amplifying their brand recognition and appeal.

3.2 Problem Statement:

The central problem focuses on measuring the impact of social media on the brand building among the customers of boutique hotels further the analysis includes measuring the change in perception of the consumers through the content and engagement on social media, analyse the factors which help brand building of hotels, identify the best social media preferred by customers and to develop a framework for effective use of social media in brand building.

3.3 Objectives:

The primary objectives of the proposed study are:

1. To study the impact of social media on brand building of hotel industry.
2. To measure the change in perception of the consumers through the content and engagement on social media.
3. To analyze the factors which help brand building of hotels.
4. To find out which is the best social media preferred by customers.
5. To develop a framework for effective use of social media in brand building.

3.4 Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a predictive statement, capable of being tested by scientific method that relates an independent variable to some dependent variable. Hypothesis refers to any assumption or prediction made by a researcher while doing research work.

Hypothesis for the present study:

H₀1: Social media marketing is not preferred by hoteliers over traditional channels of marketing.

H_a1: Social media marketing is preferred by hoteliers over traditional channels of marketing.

H₀2: There is no positive impact of social media on the brand building of the hotel.

H_a2: There is a positive impact of social media on brand brand-building of hotels.

H₀3: All social media channels are not equally preferred by hoteliers for brand building.

H_a3: All social media channels are equally preferred by hoteliers for brand building.

H₀4: There is no significant difference in the hotel's preferences for social media channels.

H_a4: There is a significant difference in the hotel's preference for social media channels.

3.5 Research Design:

Research design is basically an overall strategy which the investigator adopts so as to answer the research questions and further in order to address the set research objectives. It is being the blueprint of the whole study focusing on the procedures, methods, techniques applied to obtain the data and analyse it. The research work measures the impact of social media on the brand building among the customers of boutique hotels. The research design used is exploratory since we are trying to gain insight on the impact of social media branding on hotel industry through surveys and publishing the relevant information.

Study Design: Quantitative Research

Study Area: Rajasthan (Major Districts)

Sample Design:

1. **Sample Size:** The sample size being considered is about 500 respondents.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the impact of social media on the brand building among the customers of boutique hotels. To gauge this impact, a quantitative survey approach was employed, targeting individuals who have experience as customers or followers of boutique hotels. This study specifically focuses on boutique hotels located in various districts of Rajasthan, India, chosen based on their prominence in social media marketing activities and investment. The selected boutique hotels for inclusion in this study comprise Taj Lake Palace, RAAS Jodhpur, RAAS Devigarh, Rajmahal Palace, RAAS Jaipur, Golden Tulip Essential Jaipur, among others.

2. **Sampling techniques:** non-probability-based convenience sampling technique.

The data collected is firstly cleaned, edited accordingly, coded, or classified and finally tabulated for the analysis purpose. Various statistical methods such as percentage analysis, Chi-Square test, T-Test, Multiple Regression and ANOVA were being applied to analyse the data. Based on the results the corresponding interpretations are being drawn which are in connection with the research objectives.

Instrument Development

A well-structured questionnaire is being developed which contains a set of multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions. The data collection instrument is divided into two sections. In the first section questions related to demographic aspects were included and the second section contains questions related to social media marketing efforts, preference for social media platforms, brand awareness, loyalty etc. For checking the reliability and validity of the instrument Cronbach's Alpha method is being used.

Sources of Information:

Basically, there are two type of data collection methods which includes primary source and secondary source of data collection. In our research work, both types of data collection methods are being used.

Firstly, a well-structured questionnaire as an instrument is being used for collecting primary data. The questionnaire is being distributed to individuals who have experience as customers or followers of boutique hotels.

In order to collect secondary data different sources were used such as newspapers, magazines, government sites, organizations' internal reports, consultancies, NGOs, and websites also guidance from field experts and academicians was taken.

- The secondary information was collected from the journals and proceedings published in IEEE, Springer, Saga, Elsevier, Wiley, MDI etc.
- Research papers related to social media marketing efforts, brand building and consumer preferences were being studied.
- Various government sites were being used for secondary data collection which includes past data and statistical inferences.
- The research integrated perspectives and insights from specialized journals that specifically address the impact of social media marketing on brand building.
- The books related to digital marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing and web analytics were consulted for acquiring the relevant and background information.

- Various digital resources were being used for secondary data collection such as online portals, websites, blogs, digital resources, e-books, and e-papers.
- Data source selection for secondary data is of uttermost importance and further which act as a foundation for the research work under consideration.

3.6 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

Mainly the questionnaire includes both types of questions close-ended and open-ended. The questionnaire includes two sections the first section includes questions related to the demographic aspects of the respondents in order to create respondents' profiles. Accordingly, the questions asked were related to demographic characteristics such as age, gender, location, designation, educational background, type of organization, experience etc whereas the second part included questions related to different types of social media platforms, user satisfaction, brand awareness, frequency of usage, consumer preferences, brand building etc.

Structure of Questionnaire:

The questionnaire includes the questions related to:

- Demographic Aspects
- Social Media Platforms
- Use of social media
- User satisfaction
- Brand Awareness
- Brand Equity
- Brand Image
- Brand Loyalty
- Social Media Marketing Efforts

3.7 Statistical Methods Applied:

A variety of statistical methods, including Variance, Standard deviation, Mean Rating, PLS, Multiple Regression, T-Test, Chi-Square-Test, ANOVA, F-Test were applied to find the association between various aspects related to social media marketing efforts and brand building. The analysis part was done using the software such as Excel and

SPSS. Using Excel descriptive analysis was conducted and through SPSS Multiple Regression and hypothesis testing was done.

3.7 Reliability Test:

A reliability test is conducted to assess the consistency and stability of a questionnaire or survey instrument. It helps determine whether the questions within the questionnaire consistently measure the intended constructs or variables. There are several methods for conducting reliability tests, and two common ones are:

Cronbach's Alpha: Cronbach's Alpha, also known as coefficient alpha, is a widely used measure of internal consistency. It assesses how well the items in a questionnaire or scale correlate with each other. A high Cronbach's Alpha value (typically above 0.70) indicates good internal consistency, suggesting that the items are reliable in measuring the same construct.

Test-Retest Reliability: Test-retest reliability assesses the stability of questionnaire responses over time. In this method, the same questionnaire is administered to the same group of participants on two separate occasions. The responses from the two administrations are then compared using statistical measures like Pearson's correlation coefficient. A high correlation between the two sets of responses indicates good test-retest reliability.

The reliability test is being conducted to find the internal consistency which is often known as dependability and is one of the most important aspects for assessing the reliability.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.81	40

The reliability statistics table as shown above confirms that the calculated Cronbach's Alpha is found to 0.81 when considered with 40 number of items. Accordingly, as the Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.81 is higher than the value 0.70 which confirms that there

is high degree of internal consistency between the items in the questionnaire suggesting that they are efficiently measuring the same basic construct or concept.

3.8 Research Gap:

The identified research gaps are as follows:

- **Long-term Brand Loyalty:** Most studies focus on short-term impacts of social media on brand perception and customer decisions. Research is needed to understand how social media engagement with boutique hotels affects long-term brand loyalty and repeat visits.
- **Segmentation and Personalization:** Explore how boutique hotels can leverage social media to segment their audience effectively and deliver personalized content and experiences. How does personalization influence brand perception and customer retention?
- **Comparative Analysis:** Conduct a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of different social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok) in building and sustaining brand equity for boutique hotels. Identify which platforms are most suitable for different hotel types.
- **Influence of User-Generated Content (UGC):** Investigate how UGC, such as guest reviews, photos, and videos, impact brand building for boutique hotels. Analyse the trustworthiness and influence of UGC compared to hotel-generated content.
- **Crisis Management:** Research the role of social media in managing and mitigating crises (e.g., negative reviews, safety concerns) for boutique hotels. How do crisis response strategies on social media affect brand reputation?
- **Social Media Advertising vs. Organic Engagement:** Compare the effectiveness of paid social media advertising with organic engagement strategies in building brand awareness and loyalty for boutique hotels.
- **Cross-Cultural Analysis:** Examine how cultural differences influence the impact of social media on brand perception among customers of boutique hotels. Do cultural nuances affect the effectiveness of social media campaigns?

- **Offline and Online Integration:** Investigate strategies for integrating social media brand-building efforts with offline experiences at boutique hotels. How can online engagement seamlessly transition into real-world interactions?
- **Measurement and Metrics:** Develop standardized measurement tools and metrics for assessing the impact of social media on brand equity in boutique hotels. Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) specific to the industry.
- **Employee Advocacy:** Explore the role of employees in brand building through their personal social media accounts. How can boutique hotels encourage and leverage employee advocacy on social media?
- **Sustainability and Social Responsibility:** Investigate how boutique hotels can use social media to communicate and build their brand around sustainability and social responsibility initiatives. How does this impact customer perceptions?
- **Technology and Innovation:** Analyse how emerging technologies (e.g., augmented reality, virtual reality, chatbots) on social media platforms can be used by boutique hotels to enhance brand engagement and customer experiences.
- **Effects of Algorithm Changes:** Study how changes in social media algorithms (e.g., Facebook's News Feed algorithm updates) impact the reach and engagement of boutique hotels' content and their brand-building efforts.
- **Ethical Considerations:** Examine the ethical implications of social media marketing for boutique hotels, including issues related to data privacy, transparency, and manipulation of online reviews.

3.9 Summary:

Social media, originating from computer-based technology, serves as a platform for the exchange of ideas and information by establishing virtual networks and communities. It plays a pivotal role in the realm of digital marketing, which includes promotional activities conducted through various digital channels such as search engines, websites, social media platforms, email, and mobile applications. This research work studies the impact of social media on brand building among the customers of boutique hotels and also finds the association between social media marketing efforts & brand building. The study specifically focuses on boutique hotels located in various districts of Rajasthan, India, chosen based on their prominence in social media marketing activities and

investment. The primary data collection was done using a well-structured questionnaire. Initially pilot survey was being conducted to identify the internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire. According to the results of reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha) it was found that there was high internal consistency between the items in the questionnaire.