

# The Role and Potential of Social Media Marketing in Attracting Tourist and Creating Brand Destination Image

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## Abstract

This research project focuses on exploring how social media affects tourists in the hospitality sector, especially in creating brand destination image. The theoretical framework for this study is developed by drawing upon various managerial literature and previous empirical research. The mix of surveys and interviews is used to gather data from tourists, managers, staff members, and random tourists. The finding showed that social media marketing has a positive impact on the brand destination image and is a cost-effective way to promote businesses. It is very interesting to see how social media can facilitate direct communication and increase brand awareness.

**Keywords:** Social media marketing, hospitality and tourism sector, brand Awareness, brand destination image

**JEL Classification:** L83, L86, M31, M37

## 1. Introduction

The rise of social media, especially social networking sites, has had a significant impact on our society and economy (Milano, Baggio & Piattelli, 2011). With the introduction of the internet, access to these platforms has become widespread, leading to a global phenomenon. In the Web 2.0 era, more and more people started using the internet for social networking sites (Milano, Baggio & Piattelli, 2011; and Seth, 2012). People use them for job networking, entertainment, and targeted marketing (Clarka and Robert, 2010). Social networking sites Facebook enables users worldwide to connect and engage quickly by sharing photos, posts and comments based on interests. These interactive features facilitate rapid feedback for companies and immediate responses for users. The technology and software offered by such sites are part of Web 2.0 system (Seth, 2012), integrating user-generated content that collaborates across multiple online sources to create a cohesive final product. User-generated content (UGC) has revolutionised traditional marketing, especially in media advertising. These ads, often sponsored posts endorsed by individuals on social networking sites, are perceived as more trustworthy than mass media ads like radio, TV, magazines, and newspapers (Li & Darban, 2012). Consumers are more inclined to buy products recommended by those who have firsthand experience (experience goods) rather than search for goods. This approach can also be applied effectively in the tourism industry. Social media, considered the second generation of web design and development, focuses on facilitating communication, information sharing, collaboration, and interoperability. Popular social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. In 2010, Facebook had 500 million users, while Twitter reported 75 million users. On average, consumers spend over 5.5 hours daily on social media sites. These platforms serve as effective channels for communities with shared interests, objectives, and activities.

The present study aim is to analyse in hotel marketing, the social media's role and potential to attract central London tourists".

This research enhances the body of knowledge by providing detailed information about the role of social media and its potential to attract tourists in central London. As evident, prior to the introduction of the internet, word of mouth was used to share views and opinions regarding

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products with family and friends. However, in the present era, the social network is the most powerful force in creating the image and opinion. Therefore, academics and practitioners would benefit from this research to a larger extent. In addition, marketers need to form online partnerships with different communities to attract and engage loyal customers (cited from Popesu, et al., 2013). Social media marketing requires dedication, active involvement, and interactions (Hailey, 2010). The key resources needed are time and commitment for effective social marketing. However, many hotels lack the necessary resources for successful implementation of social marketing strategies. Rather than simply sharing information or collecting content, marketers should interact with customers through conversation without continuously promoting sales (Walsh,2010). According to R'athonyi (2013), Marketers must assure their customers of the hotel content's benefits relevant to their needs; the hotel's presence should not be perceived as a nuisance. Major hotels such as Four-Season Hotels & Resorts, Hilton, and MGM Grand have effectively and completely integrated social media in their marketing strategies, nonetheless, many hotels struggle with where to start and what actions to take. It is crucial for hotels to use social platforms. This study aims to explore these aspects which haven't been extensively researched before.

## 2. Literature Review

At present, it is interesting to see the challenges faced by the hotel industry in adapting to the evolving landscape of social media marketing. Social networking platforms like Twitter and Facebook indeed offer vast opportunities for hotels to engage with potential guests and leverage viral networks (Walsh, 2010). Businesses that have embraced social media early on have seen the benefits of building relationships with consumers through these platforms. The direct communication facilitated by social media not only promotes transparency and honesty but also serves as a powerful tool for brand communication (Hailey, 2010). The example of Lurpak using its website as a platform for engagement showcases the effectiveness of leveraging the virtual environment for marketing purposes (Labbrand Consulting, 2010). The impact of social media marketing in the hospitality sector, especially how guests value consumer reviews over traditional ratings. The study by McCarthy and Stock highlights the importance of online reviews in influencing consumer decisions (Hospitality Industry, 2010). The shift towards online research and review reading before purchasing products or services, as mentioned by Nielsen, demonstrates the significant role of social networking sites in consumer behaviour. The ability of social media to facilitate communication and build connections with consumers through mobile apps is indeed a game-changer for the industry, enhancing brand exposure and loyalty (Dina & Sabou,2012). This evolution from basic communication to trustworthy interactions is crucial in attracting and retaining customers in the competitive hospitality market (Seth, 2012).

The significant impact of social media networks on the hospitality sector, as highlighted by the Fortune Global 100 Social Media Study conducted by Burson-Marsteller in 2010. The study revealed that a large percentage of top companies are actively using various social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Corporate Blogs, and Facebook to engage with their audience. Twitter seems to be a popular choice among Fortune Global 100 companies, with 65% having a presence on the platform (cited from Burson-Marsteller, 2010). Additionally, many companies are utilising YouTube and Facebook to reach their audience effectively. Moreover, the rise of photo sharing in the 21st century has become a key trend, allowing people to connect globally through social media platforms (R'athonyi, 2013). This presents a significant opportunity for the tourism industry to attract consumers by sharing visually appealing photos and videos of beautiful landscapes. It's fascinating to see how social media has become a powerful tool for brands to connect with their audience and showcase their offerings effectively.

Hotels and tourism businesses are all about social media these days to boost their brand recognition (Assenov & Khurana, 2012). They put a lot of time and effort into it, but it is a cost-effective

marketing tool. Social networking sites make it easy for them to interact with customers quickly. Businesses benefit greatly from using advanced communication technologies for efficiency, flexibility and collaboration with suppliers (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012). Using mobile apps to access social networking sites enhances their strategies by providing quick access and offline viewing convenience (Bredican et al., 2014). Search engines have also become significant tools due to the easy access to information on the Internet (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

A growing number of hotels are joining social networking sites to build their brand image and to promote their offerings. This helps in convincing consumers that money is well spent and encourages return business along with generating brand awareness (Mahmood et al, 2012). Social networking sites are becoming increasingly important for promoting products, especially in the tourism industry (Indian Express, 2014). As per Zeng (2013) “utilising social media for marketing tourism services and products can be very effective. Assenov and Khurana (2012) proposed that, “it would be practical to provide Facebook users with the promotion of special offers when they have become a Facebook fan of the company's Facebook fan page”. Knowledge hiding can negatively impact employee performance (Haque, 2024). Additionally, numerous studies confirm that stress affects performance (Haque, 2023; Urbański & Haque, 2020; Haque, Sher, & Urbański, 2020; Rahman et al., 2020; Kaur, 2023; Jose & Kaur, 2023; Kot et al., 2020; Ślusarczyk et al., 2020; Toor et al., 2023; Haque et al., 2020; Haque et al., 2019; Kot et al., 2019; Haque & Oino, 2019; Haque et al., 2021; Nair et al., 2021; Haque & Yamoah, 2021; Haque, 2022). However, it remains unclear if social media plays a role in reducing stress.

Customer relationship management, sustainable choices, and innovation are crucial in the service sector (Obuobi et al., 2023; Yamoah et al., 2020; Kumah et al., 2023). Additionally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is vital for the service sector in emerging economies (Rakov & Haque, 2023). Kot et al. (2024) argued that corporate practices vary among organizations, while Haque & Yamoah explored the corporate management ecosystem in emerging economies. The nature and dynamics of emerging economies differ regardless of industry type, such as tourism, service, or manufacturing (Haque & Yamoah, 2023). Thus, corporate governance in the service industry is crucial (Dodoo, Yamoah & Haque, 2023).

There is potential for sustainable tourism in emerging economies (Akhter & Haque, 2023; Haq et al., 2023; Haque, Haq & Yamoah, 2023; Haque, Faizan & Yamoah, 2023; Yamoah & Haque, 2023), but the role of social media in fostering sustainable tourism is not yet evidenced. Inflation can impact investment plans in developing countries (Hasran et al., 2023). Service quality and relationship management also influence marketing performance in the hospitality sector (Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022). Adamovich et al. (2021) found that different tourism activities affect consumers in tourism destinations, while Gusakov et al. (2020) discovered that open innovation mechanisms work well in the tourism industry. Environmental concerns and sustainable ecological behavior need support from established institutions (Bulut et al., 2021; Farooq et al., 2021).

Social media are innovative Web-based applications in online marketing (Yang, et al., 2010). Companies utilise social media to form online communities to (1) build new business models that include a new product marketing channel (Ulusu, 2010; Yang et al., 2010 and 2008), and (2) build strong relationships with consumers by overcoming limitations of time and place (Bolotaeva & Cata, 2010). In online marketing, social media plays a vital role in creating online communities to develop new business models and build strong relationships with consumers. Marketers can gather valuable information from consumer profiles, understand their preferences and receive direct feedback (Ulusu, 2010).

Social media platforms like Facebook can help businesses understand consumer needs and preferences, improve customer relationships through Customer Relationship Management. Understanding consumer decision-making behaviour is crucial. Social networking sites can

expand a company's reach and make it easier to target and connect with consumers (Murray & Waller, 2012).

### 3. Research Methodology

Sekaran and Bougie, (2013), in the beginning, suggested that Inductive approach application is valuable in identifying and analysing the fundamental factors in a highly comprehensive manner. In the commencement, the use of inductive approach is classified according to Sekaran & Bougie (2012), he proposes that significant influences can be identified and analysed through this approach in a comprehensive manner. With respondents the in-depth interviews are achieved with the utilisation of a qualitative approach which permits the attainment of detailed information in a highly time efficient manner; however, technique determination is vital (Sekaran, 2012). The most significant purpose of applying this approach is to ensure the use of appropriate combinations of available tools and their modification according to the need of the present research. Rationalized questionnaire, as a tool contained within the qualitative approach, comprises close-ended questions. Additionally, the undertaken research technique is an alignment with the work of Venkatesh et al., (2013) that directs towards the discovery of the results that are both, valid and reliable. In-depth and detailed analyses are conducted to discover a relationship between the present research and existing variables which is permitted by ensuring a realism philosophy. The two significant features of the current research method are Qualitative and Quantitative approach. The model is beneficial for sampling compliance for the purpose of close execution.

To determine and resolve the research problem of the current research, the research utilises the cross-sectional method. The most predominant reason for the consideration and application of cross-sectional approach is that it is highly time-effective in comparison to the longitudinal research approach (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Moreover, the time in research is one the most significant influence of constraining in the present research study. Secondary analyses are important in research (Haque, 2022). Longitudinal studies provide in-depth understanding over different intervals (Younas et al., 2022), while cross-sectional studies are completed in less than a year (Yamoah et al., 2022; Ogwu et al., 2022; Yamoah & Haque, 2022; Rahim et al., 2022; Foster et al., 2022; Haque, 2021; Faizan et al., 2019; U-Hameed et al., 2019; Haque et al., 2018; Javed et al., 2018; Imran et al., 2018; Imran, Haque & Rebilas, 2018; Imran et al., 2018; Faizan et al., 2018; Haque et al., 2017a & 2017b; Haque et al., 2016; Haque & Aston, 2016; Faizan & Haque, 2016; Haque et al., 2015; Faizan & Haque, 2015; Haque & Yamoah, 2014).

An application of 'convenience sampling' technique in the current study by the researcher. While the elements of the generalisation factor of this method is highly well-known, Moreover, the broad range of the Convenience sampling method provides researchers with the benefits of a generalised result as it provisions the researcher to perform research in a widespread socio-economic environment. The interviews with both professionals and associated managers are conducted as they are considered research tools. To eliminate any risk of vague outcomes or respondent manipulation, the researcher personally circulated the survey questionnaire among the research participants. Additionally, in the current research, researchers employed the questionnaire established through the 'Value survey model'.

A sample set of 55 for the survey questionnaire and for the detailed interviews, 10 participants (two hotel managers, four staff members, and four tourists) by the researcher because of the limited time availability and inconvenience. The selection of manager and staff members from the Hotels was due to their time flexibility factor. Moreover, tourists were selected based on asking them preliminary questions. Those who were visiting the place for the first time were considered.

For the present research the most fundamental tool is individually designed "survey questionnaire". Furthermore, the current researcher's respondent is invigorated to get accustomed

to the research topic and its subject's theme by developing close-ended questions. The association amongst research variables is developed with the assistance of the closed-ended questions, which is an additional reason for the use. The outcome ranking is done with the use of Likert scale with the support of Matrix degree to accomplish this. This is recognized on the cores of questionnaire scale. In this, 1 on the scale is highly significant however, 5 has no significance of any sort, for instance, "1= Strongly Agree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Disagree, 5= Strongly Disagree". The scale commences from 1, being highly extreme and continues to 5. An opportunity to ask respondent's an open-ended question, in the current research, is accomplished through the assistance of an unstructured interview survey with the utilization of 'Snowballing technique'.

The data collection from both primary and secondary sources was another vital phase of the research process following the target audience setting. To the reliable data gathering method, the research's personal contribution is evident and the process itself must be concluded without abandon. For the current research study, the age requirement was the age group of 18 to 65 due to the greater number of tourists from a similar age group.

In research, validity is the highly critical element to minimize the respondent's personal biasness and manipulation of the research question (Brown, 2012). The research outcomes can be accomplished in an effective manner through conducting an appropriate check on every phase of the current research process. Moreover, the research's valid conclusion is supported through the essential aspect. The approach of combining qualitative and quantitative ways was utilized to conclude the respondent's validity due to its significantly critical component in discovering the findings and results. The survey questionnaire was distributed personally by the researcher. There was proper implementation of suitable statistics tools for the purpose of achieving relevant data to conclude and evaluate the outcome.

Another critical factor is the element of 'Reliability' particularly for the research study conduction as it plays a crucial role in ensuring that suitable respondents are nominated for the research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). In the current research the reliability test is conducted in the form of 'Pilot Study'.

Another highly critical phase for research is ethics; ethics in research should not be overlooked or disregarded at any cost. The ethics' concept is universal and has been regarded by various researchers universally. The fundamental purpose of ethics is to confirm and sustain the information confidentiality along with the viewpoints presented by the research respondents for the research process. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research.

#### 4. Findings and Discussions

In this study, male tourist participants constituted 58% whereas female participants were 48%. Thus, based on gender, male respondents form the majority. It is evident that most of the respondents lie in (36-44) age bracket as it is 35% of the sample size, followed by 31% (18-26) age bracket, 16% (27-35) age bracket, and 18% is the age of 45 or above. Therefore, in the present survey, more than 1/3 of the participants are mature. Moreover, in this study, most respondents are employed on wages as it formed (38%). 23% are self-employed while students constituted 9% whereas all others were 30%. This indicates that this study has a high number of participants who are working on wages.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

Demographic Variables				
Gender	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>		
	58%	42%		

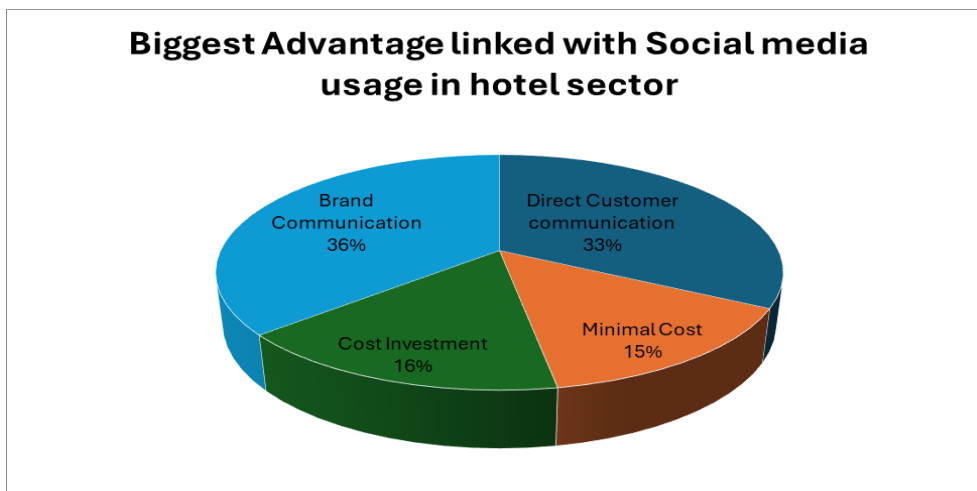
Age	18-26 years	27-35 years	36-44 years	45 or above
	31%	16%	35%	18%
Occupation	Students	Self-employed	Employed on Wages	Others
	9%	23%	38%	30%

The correlation is evident between social media and tourist branding interlinked variables. As evident, there is a significant strong positive correlation between social media and brand image ( $=0.831$ ). Moreover, social media has a statistically significant positive correlation with the consumer connectivity ( $=0.935$ ) and social media also has a strong positive correlation with the commercial advantage ( $=0.781$ ). Hence, it is confirmed that social media plays a significant role in creating a positive brand image of tourist destinations. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis. In other words, social media affects the brand image of the tourist destination in a significant manner. Regarding establishing the relationship between hotel and consumers through social media, it is evident that 73% agree to a certain extent and 22% disagreed while 5% opted to remain neutral. Through the above chart this is confirmed that in present study respondents largely feel that social media strengthen relationships with customers. Thus, most of the sample size agreed which means that present study support study of Walsh (2010) whereas oppose work of Litvin et al., (2008). Moreover, it is found that 56% strongly agree while 27% just agreed so a total 86% agreed there is a close relationship between various types of commercial advantages and social media. Furthermore, results showed that 4% opted to be neutral while only 11% responded in negative. The findings strongly indicate that participants in study feel that social media does create commercial advantages. Based on these findings, the present study is aligned with the work of Hailey (2010) but differs with the work of Seth (2012) in this regard.

**Table 2:** Correlation between interlinked variables related to tourist branding

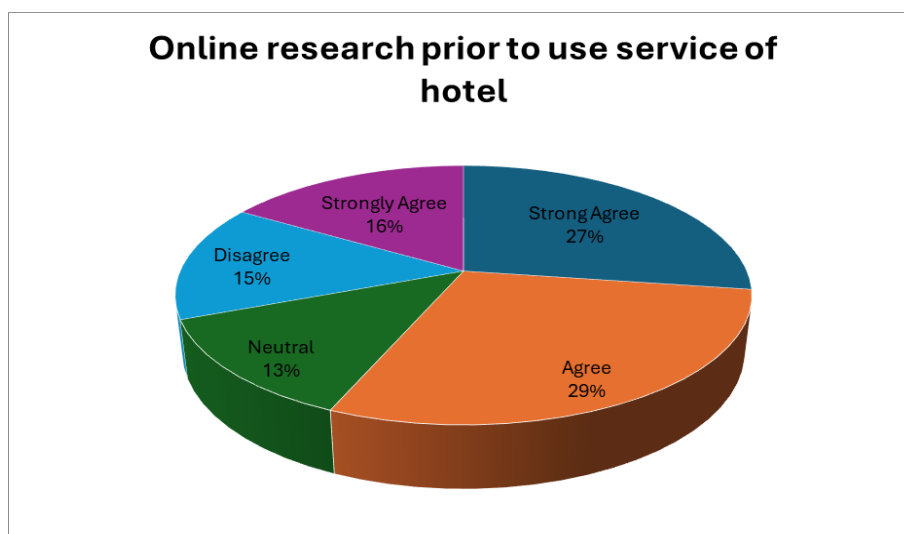
	Social media	Brand Image	Consumer connectivity	Commercial advantage
Social media	1			
Brand Image	0.831	1		
Consumer connectivity	0.935	0.754	1	
Commercial advantage	0.876	0.830	0.698	1

Researchers wanted to investigate the most significant dimensional commercial advantage linked with social media. Results revealed that brand communication is supported by a majority with 36%. Next close to it is direct customer communication as it accounted for 33%. Cost investment read 16% while lowest of all is minimal cost with 15% respectively. Again, the relationship with all commercial advantages' dimension is established thus this study confirms previous work of Hailey (2010). These results also mean that Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012) findings are opposed by this study.



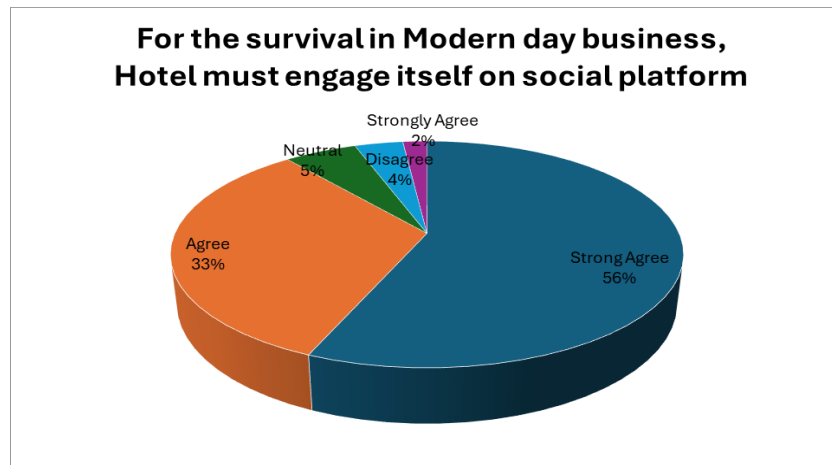
Direct Customer communication	Minimal Cost	Cost Investment	Brand Communication
18	8	9	20

Most participants (56%) agreed that they prefer to do online searches before opting for services. Thus, this reflects that many participants prior to their consumption read reviews of others to make their decision regarding consumption of product or services. Moreover, 13% remained neutral whereas 31% responded in disagreement. Therefore, present findings are to some extent aligned with Nielsen Company's report survey (2012). To a certain extent this study differs with the work of Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012).



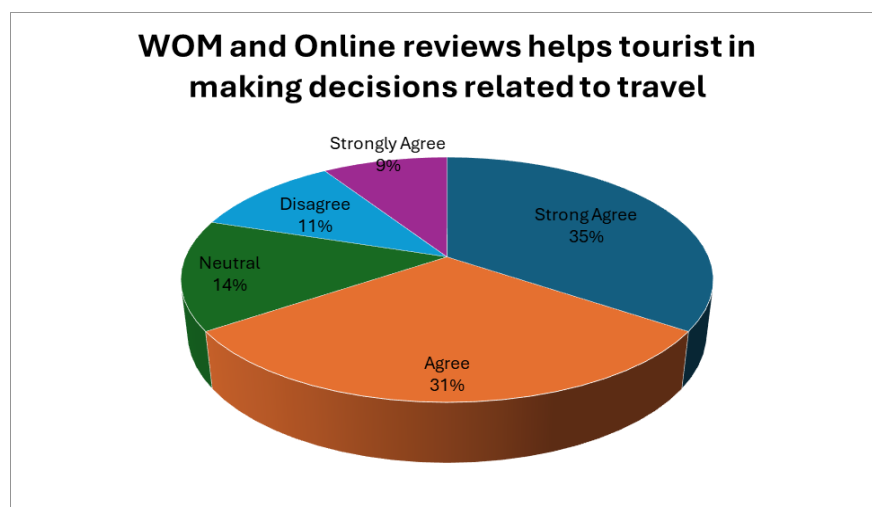
Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
15	16	7	8	9

The results confirmed that it is essential to adapt social networking tools and techniques to survive in modern day business as the majority of participants (89%) agreed to it. Moreover, only 6% disagreed with this statement while only 5% disagreed with it. Therefore, this study supports previous empirical studies of Burson-Marsteller (2010) and R'athonyi (2013) whereas the previous empirical study of Bilighan et al., (2014) is opposed in the light of present evidence.



Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
31	18	3	2	1

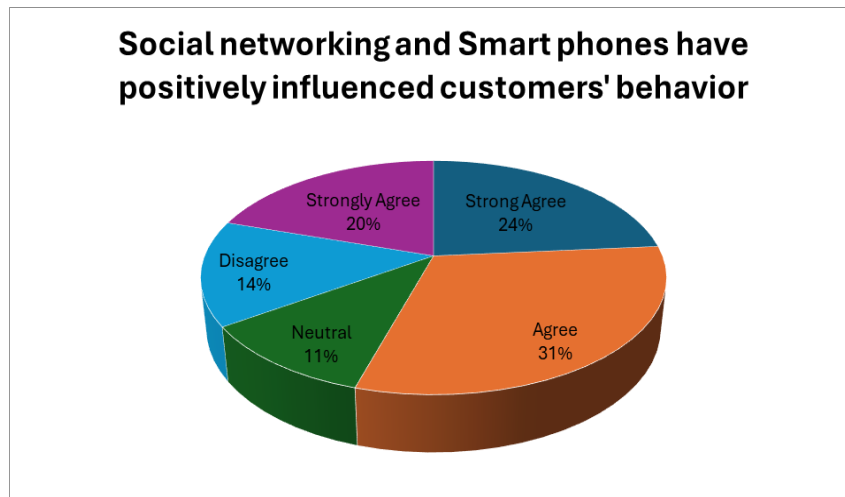
The findings revealed that 66% of sample size agreed that word-of-mouth along with online reviews help tourists in decision making. Interestingly, 14% chose to remain neutral while 20% disagreed with it. Therefore, this study is aligned with the previous studies including Manap and Adzharudin (2013) and Fotis, et al., (2012). In addition to that, Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012) and Litvin et al., (2008) study notion regarding no role of WOM in decision making is rejected by present findings.



Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
19	17	8	6	5

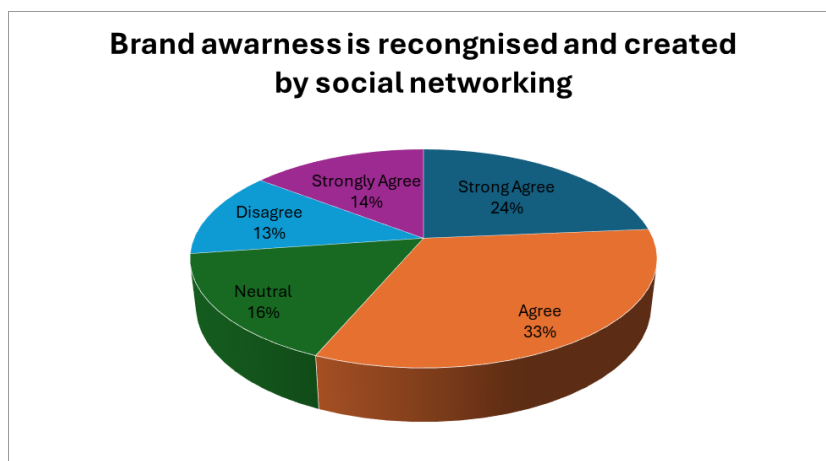
In response to investigating consumers' behaviour being influenced by social networking and smart phones it is evident that 55% of the respondents agreed to this notion. Moreover, 34% disagreed while only 11% were not sure in this regard. Thus, the findings to some extent support the work of Bredican and Vigar-Ellis (2014), R'athonyi (2013), and Hvass and Munar (2012).





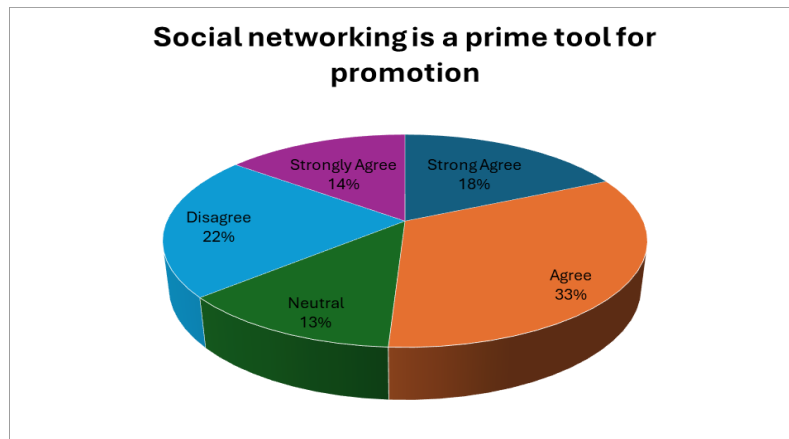
Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
13	17	6	8	11

Approximately 57% (majority) agreed that brand awareness and brand recognition is gained through social networking. Moreover, 27% disagreed whereas those who were undecided formed 16%. Therefore, the present study firmly supports the notion of Assenov and Khurana (2012).



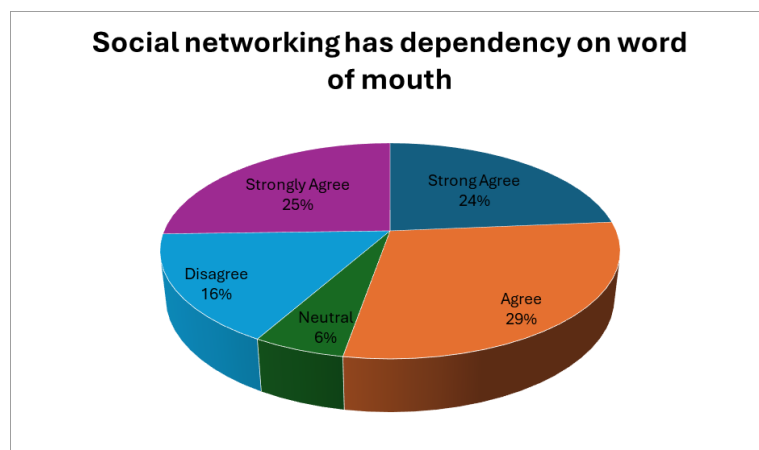
Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
13	18	9	7	8

Data findings showed that 51% (majority) agreed that nowadays hotels are using social networking as a tool for promotion of their brand and services. Furthermore, to some extent 36% of participants showed disagreement while only 13% remained neutral. These findings showed that present study is aligned with the work of Zeng (2013), Assenov and Khurana (2012), and Yang et al., (2008).



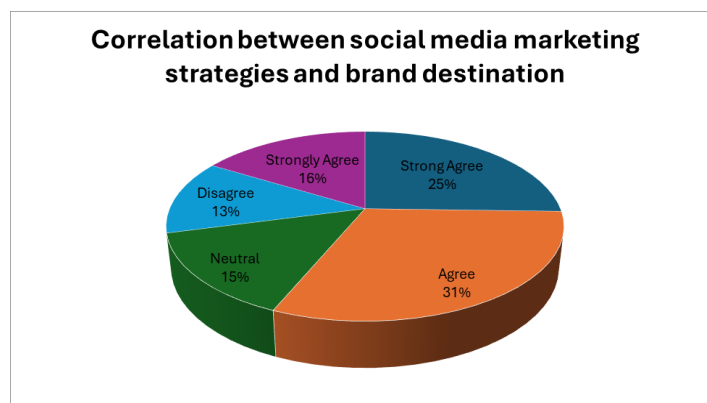
Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
10	18	7	12	8

Most of the participants (53%) agreed that social media depends on WOM (word-of-mouth). 6% remain undecided while 41% disagree with the statement. This shows that present findings support Ranjha (2010) whereas they disagree with the work on Litvin, et al., (2008) and Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012).



Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
13	16	3	9	14

The correlation between social media marketing strategies and brand destination is being confirmed by 56% of sample size who agreed to it. However, this linkage has been opposed by 29% while 15% remain undecided. This means that the study of Manap and Adzharudin, (2013) Fotis, et al., (2012), Walsh (2010), Hailey (2010) and Ranjha (2010).



Strong Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
14	17	8	7	9

### Interview results

In an interview with the management, it is found that social networking is significant in establishing a strong relationship with the consumers as 83% of the respondents agreed to it. We found that management uses social networking sites to strengthen relationships with the target audience. From tourists, it is found that 75% that there is a strong correlation between social networking and consumers. The researcher evidently found that there is correlation from tourists' perspective. Therefore, this study supports the findings of Walsh (2010) whereas opposes the notion of Yang et al., (2010) in this regard. Moreover, Management was asked about the advantages of social networking and 67% of the participants agreed to some extent that in modern day business, social media and networking is vital as it helps firms in different dimensions. The management highly considered brand communication as the biggest advantage whereas other participants considered direct customer communication. Interestingly, no participant considered minimal cost investment as an advantage of social networking. From a tourist perspective, it was explored that 75% confirmed that social networking gives distinctive competitive advantage. However, largely present findings support the work of Hailey (2010) but this study also opposes some notions of the same study of Hailey (2010). The majority in management (83%) of the sample size in the interview agreed that social networking has helped in attaining competitive edge. Moreover, most respondents agreed that direct customer communication is the biggest advantage of social media.

50% of tourists confirmed this notion too therefore this also reflects that there is variation in the findings as tourists stated in interview brand communication as the main advantage whereas management perspective is direct customer communication. However, the present findings are aligned with the work of Hailey (2010). Furthermore, interviews with hotel management revealed that there is large sufficient data available online prior booking. There are very limited walk-in customers in comparison to prior bookers. Thus, it is evident that customers use online booking. Most participants agreed that most clients search online for reviews and ratings on social networks before making a reservation. Regarding the essentiality and significance of social media and networking to survive in the modern-day business, majority of the participants (67%) in management agreed that it is vital for hotels to adapt social media as a tool to communicate with targeted audiences. However, 50% of the tourists disagreed with it by stating that it is not entirely necessary as the brand name speaks for itself. Moreover, the tourist stated that though they feel that social networking is a need of modern times, it is not always a prior booking concept as some of them book on spot and find it convenient. Thus, present findings support the work of R'athonyi (2013) and Burson-Marsteller (2010).

Management's perspective regarding word-of-mouth (WOM) was explored and it was evident that most of the visitors visit hotel due to WOM. Moreover, most respondents (83%) believe that positive online reviews and word-of-mouth (WOM) play an essential role in influencing customer's decision-making. In addition to that, 50% of the respondents believe that customers' attitude and behaviour has been strongly influenced in a positive manner by the development of smartphone applications and social networking. The tourist perspective was further evaluated and WOM is evident that 75% agreed with it as it has been influential in their decision making. Moreover, social networking influences their attitude and behaviour are being supported by 75%. Therefore, it is now confirmed that WOM and online reviews are strong forces behind decision-making of customers thus this study confirms the previous findings of Fotis et al., (2012) and Manap and Adzharudin (2013). Thus, this study does not entirely support the earlier work of Bredican and Vigar-Ellis (2014), but the notion of customer behaviour constructively influenced by social media and smartphones is confirmed. Moreover, this study supports the previous findings of Hyass and Munar (2012) and R'athonyi (2013).

Interestingly, not many participants (35%) in management and 25% in tourists only agreed that social interaction enhances customer loyalty whereas 60% credited that social interaction helps in customer communication, feedback, and brand awareness thus to some extent satisfaction may increase but loyalty is not always the case. Thus, these findings differ with survey questionnaires as well with the previous empirical research of Seth (2012), Dina and Sabou (2012), and Popescu et al., (2013). Moreover, the work of Assenov and Khurana (2012) and Bilghian et al., (2014) is absolutely opposed in this regard. In addition to that, 83% (majority of management) agreed that brand related awareness and recognition is attained by means of social media interactions. Similarly, 75% of tourists also confirmed that social interaction helps them in getting aware of brands. Thus, it is confirmed that hotels use social media to enhance brand awareness and recognition. Therefore, this notion is aligned with the work of Assenov and Khurana (2012).

Interviews with the management revealed that 67% of participants agreed that for the purpose of promotion, social media has been used extensively by management and consumers. Interviews with tourists showed that 50% felt that for promotion, hotels usually use social media. Again, present findings confirm Assenov and Khurana (2012) notion that nowadays, social networking is the easiest and widely used tool to promote business. Along with Assenov and Khurana's study, the work of Yang et al., (2008) and Zeng (2013) are also supported by this finding. Management accounted for 67% stating that most of social media networking is heavily dependent on the WOM. Interestingly, 55% of tourist participants agreed that social media heavily relies on WOM. Therefore, this finding clearly supports the work of Ranjha (2010) while opposing the findings of Lange-Faria and Elliot (2012) and Litvin et al., (2008). The majority of the participants in management (85%) agreed that social media marketing has a vital role in the success of the hotel. Moreover, the management revealed that it has a strong positive role in promoting business activities and channelizing future trends. In addition to that, management was asked about the relationship between brand destination and social media marketing and 67% (majority) agreed that there is a strong significant relation between these two variables. Tourist response regarding the role of social media and relationship between social media marketing and brand destination is confirmed by 75% and 50% respectively. Thus, from interviews it is evident that there is a correlation between social media marketing and brand destination.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research aim of the present study was 'to investigate the social media's role in hotels to interest and fascinate tourists in central London. Thus, social media marketing plans of selected hotels were explored. The results showed that marketing strategies have been altered by hotels as now it is using social media as a communication tool to directly communicate with the audience.

Previously marketing via different modes was used to strengthen the relationship with customers but nowadays, social media is the most widely used tool that is prompt and effective in communicating with the audience. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Friend-square, and LinkedIn are some of the modern days designed websites that are frequent platforms for firms to promote their brand, products, and services in multiple dimensions.

We found that with the introduction of social networking, the earlier marketing concepts for hotels have been modified and many participants feel that this has strengthened the relationship between hotel and its targeted audience. The present study also found that social media adds to the list of commercial advantages. It is cost effective but most importantly it is direct marketing and communication. Through social networking prompt responses to queries, complaints, and feedback are generated. Promotion and direct communication are the most prominent features of social networking. Furthermore, through present research, determinants of social media marketing and their role in developing strategies to market hotels among tourists were explored. Interestingly, various determinants were explored through literature, and it was undertaken as advantages of social media marketing due to its commercial usage and strong managerial literature backing. The research revealed that direct brand communication and marketing is a key determinant that is used in the marketing strategy of hotels in London. Different social networking sites are used to directly promote and market the hotel by sharing its location as an ideal choice for tourists to stay in London. The key services and facilities of the Hotels were communicated to ensure that a strong brand image is demonstrated. Interestingly, direct customer communication is another key determinant that is designed in strategy to ensure clients and customers are informed about the hotel's services and facilities. Cost investment and minimal cost were also the determinants identified in this study.

Moreover, online research before selecting the use of service of the hotel is evident a very common way adopted by tourists these days. The majority (56%) have considered online search before using hotel services. In addition to that, most respondents (89%) feel that for survival in the dynamic environment, it is vital for the hotel to manage itself on social platforms. In addition to that, social media has played a very productive role in creating brand and customer loyalty as it was supported by more than 70%. Moreover, brand awareness is created by social media marketing. Therefore, this is concluded from findings that social media networking is a significant tool in the hospitality sector to enhance brand image and develop brand loyalty.

We concluded that social media marketing has a strong role in creating the brand image of a hotel. Furthermore, it is a modern tool that is used to ensure brand image is promoted and customers are communicated with properly without any delays. Nowadays, social interactions are vital to maintain strong customer loyalty. Moreover, social media is not only limited to communication, but a tool used widely to promote products and services. In addition to that, the perception and views of people are not only created but altered through social media networking. In this study, we found that there is a strong positive correlation between social media marketing and brand image of hotels.

The management of hotels operating in London focuses more on effective presence online. The detailed analysis revealed that despite some efforts being made by the hotels still it has a very traditional and conventional way of working. The use of social media is there but an effective online presence is still not very evident. To do so, immediate attention should be paid to complaints and negative reviews. For this purpose, 'Alert-cum-prompt' system strategy should be designed. The marketing policies should be clearly defined. In this marketing pattern, the online guest feedback should be properly managed because feedback will determine effective marketing policies on social media regarding online customers. There is a need to have a specific department or team to manage all social media interactions. This is a completely different job and must not be

mixed with any person's additional responsibilities. Total devotion should be made so that social media interactions are done without any delay.

The proper training should be given to employees so that the guest faces no problem. This will increase customer satisfaction. At same time, the trained employee will be a productive asset for the firm. The cost of hiring will be reduced as the retention will be more than recruitment. The satisfied employees should be trained to create a brand image by circulating the hotel's facilities and programs in their respective social circles. Since WOM has been identified in this study, this is a way to enhance the positive WOM about hotels through loyal internal and external customers. The hotel should work on improving the online reputation through adopting SEO (Search Engine Optimizer). A strong presence on different social platforms will enhance the online presence for the hotel.

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