

Examining the Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Brand Equity of Hotels: A Study in Delhi/NCR

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Abstract *This study investigates the impact of social media marketing on the brand equity of the hotel. The study also explores the direct influence of social media on the antecedents of the brand equity. The proposed research model based on the Aaker's model of Brand Equity. The data was collected from 263 participants from the Guests of Hotels of Delhi/NCR. The study specifically focused on hotels classified as five-star and five-star deluxe. The analysis, conducted using SPSS revealed that social media exerts a positive influence on Brand Image, Brand awareness and Perceived Quality, and consequently, on Brand equity as a whole. Nonetheless, Brand Loyalty remains unaffected by social media marketing.*

Keywords: *Social-Media, Brand Equity, Hotel Industry, Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Perceived Quality*

INTRODUCTION

Social media has gained popularity in the recent few years. In the highly competitive market, social media has provided the platform for their customers to gain loyalty by providing speedy services (Elrefaea, 2022). Study has reported more than 2 billion active users on social media platform for marketing their products/services (Koay, 2020). Social media has integrated itself into the daily life of humans. With technological advancements, social media marketing comes in the limelight across the marketing industry resulting in the high customer engagement on the social media platform. Lately, all the businesses persist on their social media page for sharing information, interaction with their new or existing customers, to increase brand awareness and brand image (Choi, 2016; Vries, 2012; Kunja, 2018). The interactive characteristics of social media makes it different from other marketing form; access to unlimited information about products, services, brands (Farzin, 2018), platform to share ideas with the world, compare different brand services, price, quality (Goldsmith, 2006). However, the language used on online platforms also influences the engagement of customers (Pezzuti & Leonhardt, 2021). The

online users share their feedback and experience about the products or brands helps the other users in decision making (Farzin, 2020). These days brands manage their information using social media platform to acquire new customers, deal with existing customers, create brand awareness, and prompt positive brand image to increase sales and market share (Yadav, 2018). In highly challenging market, brands face hurdles to continue in the market, therefore social media support organizations to create brand awareness and focus on the demands of their customer (Mohsin, 2021). Compared to traditional marketing approaches, social media marketing comes in less price and provides massive users to share information with. Lately, businesses uses social media marketing to build brand equity, (Mansur, 2021; Nam, 2011) establish long term relationships with customers (Sano, 2015), promote word of mouth communication (Chen, 2011). Brand Equity can be defined as brand value in the market and in monetary terms, including all the assets associated with the brand, awareness of the brand, loyal customers, image of the brand, perceived quality of products or services (Pride, 2003). The brand equity concept is essential for any brand's product or service lifecycle (Engeset, 2016). High level of brand equity reduces marketing activities as consumers

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already aware of the brand and are also loyal to the products or services (Doostar, 2012). Loyal customers always look for the brand again, which minimizes the marketing and promotion costs (Prasad, 2000). Loyal customers through the word of mouth adds new customer and brings revenue to the brand (Zaman, 2016). In the hotel industry, Brand Equity is considered as the important element for the success of the hotel, as it has potential to attract new customers & retain the existing customers (Bailey, 2006). Additionally, Brand equity is one of the tangible assets particularly for large number of customers (Erenkol, 2010; Hao, 2007; Krishnan, 2001). The key player of the industry focuses on brand equity (Doostar, 2012), furthermore market has been saturated, most of the brands invest more into customer service (Kayaman, 2007). Brands are offering similar services, becomes hard to differentiate, also seen in other service industries like airlines, banking and financial services, trading, telecommunication (Kim, 2005). Since, hotel brands use social media platform to analyze customer feedback, share their products & services, it is imperative to estimate the relationship between the social media marketing and the brand equity of the hotel. This study focuses on the five-star hotels of Delhi/NCR. The results of the study contribute to the strategic planning of the marketing managers to build strong brand equity, hence boost revenue of the hotel.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

In order to analyze the performance of the social media and the brand equity in the hospitality industry, it needs strong foundation of previous researches. A systematic review of the literature below provides the conceptual framework of the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity.

Social-Media Marketing and Customer Based Brand Equity

(Wood, 2000) defines Brand Equity as “practical structure of consumer behavior and it establishes a relationship between customer and brand”. The engagement of the brand and the customers on the social media platform creates and strengthen brand equity (Calder, 2005; Van Doorn, 2010). In other words, Brand equity is the standout position of the brand where two brands share the same marketing strategies and products or services (Yoo, 2001). Brand Equity differentiates from other brands and represents the brand (Keller, 2009). Virtual space like blogs, websites, e-commerce platforms have measurable importance in business operations and developing the brand for the organizations (Hollebeek, 2014; Khanh & ThiHoai, 2020). Social media has two-way communication which is

effective and takes less time. The communication between brands and consumers used photos, videos, text (Elrefae, 2022). Social media marketing promotes brands, aiding in brand development. Deloitte 2017, has published that Millennial considers online reviews and feedback before any purchase on the ecommerce site. Hence, the brand marketing managers should focus more on social media activities to get the millennial perception (Chu, 2019; Han, 2017). Brand communication is positive on the social media platform provides increase in brand equity (Vikas, 2021).

Social Media Marketing on Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the ability to recall or remember the brand of any product/service category (Aaker, 1991), whereas (Keller, 2009) states Brand Awareness as the power of memory of consumer’s ability to identify the particular brand of any product/service in a group of other products. Customers awareness about any brand will limit the time to decide if they chose to buy any product/service (Verbeke, 2005). Brand awareness has four stages: Brand recognition, Brand recall, top of the mind and Brand dominance (Aaker, 1996). Brand recognition is to identify the brand, whereas Brand recalling is to recollect the brand name in absence of it (Farjam, 2015). (Seo, 2018) concluded with the positive effect of social media marketing on the brand awareness and brand image on the potential customers as well as existing customers. The awareness level is directly related to the money spend on the advertisement and the frequency of the advertisement message (Gil, 2007; Bhardwaj, Kalia, Chand & Sharma, 2023). Presence of brands on social media networks is highly useful to spread brand related information, to aware the consumers about their product/service (O’Flynn, 2017). Consumer experience about the product/service with fulfilled expectation will increase brand awareness and image about the brand (Koniewski, 2012). Few studies (Chang, 2012; Barreda, 2015), concluded the importance of high brand awareness will impact Brand Image and loyalty of the customers, also the share in the market of the brand. Brand Awareness and brand loyalty are highly correlated (Baldauf, 2003; Perera, 2013).

Social Media Marketing on Brand Image

Brand Image is the perception of the brand in the consumer’s mind (Cretu, 2007; Keller, 1993). Social Media networks have significantly more influence towards Brand Image. Also, females and younger age group are more inclined to use social media and make an impact on brand image. Social Media sites used for travel purpose have positive influence on the brand image (Barreda, 2020). Internet branding and

websites are highly effective on the transferring brand image (Chen, 2007). Social media influencers have positive impact on the brand image in the cosmetics industry (Hermanda, 2019). (Savitria, 2022) found strong relationship between social media marketing and brand image.

Social Media Marketing on Brand Loyalty

(Aaker, 1996) brand loyalty is the core dimension of brand equity, hence increase in brand loyalty tend to increase in brand equity (Yoo, 2000). Brand Loyalty is the set of consumers who respond positively for the brand, rather than non-loyal customers (Luis Callarisa, 2012).

(Oliver, 1999) defined loyalty as commitment towards the brand to repeat purchase the product/service consistently. Brand Loyalty is achieved when customers are satisfied after using the brands products/services (Salah, M. et al., 2019; Chaudhuri, 2001). Regular communications of brands through social media platforms provides high customer loyalty (Ho, 2014). In the hospitality industry Loyalty can be achieved by introducing hotel loyalty/membership program (Yadav, 2020). Building long term relationships with guests also strengthens loyalty towards brand (Dahiya & Duggal, 2018; Yadav, 2020).

Social Media Marketing on Perceived Quality

Customers’ perception towards the brand related to product or service signifies Perceived Quality, which is closely related to customers preferences, customer satisfaction and their purchase decision (Nikhashemi, 2017). Perceived quality based on degree to which brand follows needs and wants of a consumer (Jin & Gu Suh, 2005). Perceived quality refers to consumer perception, results in purchase decision (Armstrong, 2003; Jin & Gu Suh, 2005). Perceived quality is not about fact, being more about perception (Garvin, 1983; J, 1998). Positive Consumers perception towards a brand target purchase and repeat purchase (Nikhashemi, 2017). On social media platforms, consumers voice their perceived quality of brand through reviews or ratings (Tyler Shanahan, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The authors have developed the framework which is based on previous studies and literature review. Below is the proposed framework:

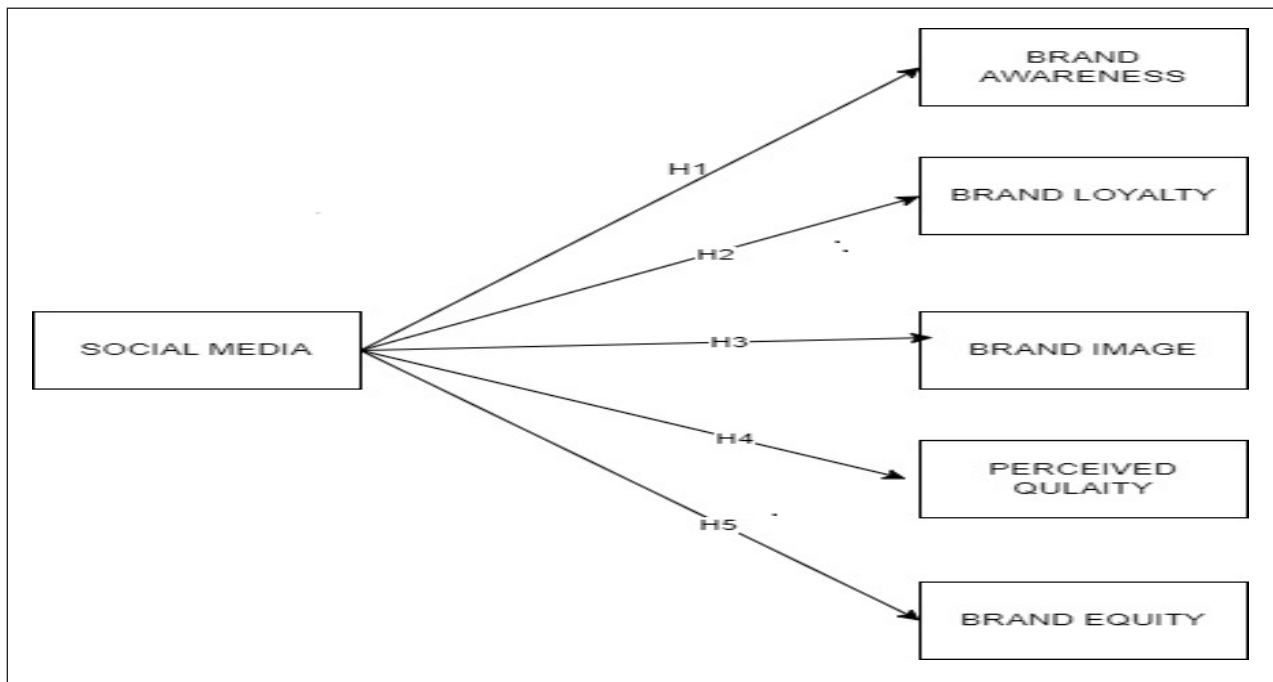


Fig. 1: Hypothesized Research Model Establishment

From the above conceptual framework, the following hypothesis formed:

H1: Social Media Marketing have a significant positive impact on the brand awareness of the hotel.

H2: Social Media Marketing have a significant positive impact on the brand loyalty of the hotel.

H3: Social Media Marketing have a significant positive impact on the brand image of the hotel.

H4: Social Media Marketing have a significant positive impact on the perceived quality of the hotel.

H5: Social Media Marketing have a significant positive impact on the overall Brand Equity of the hotel.

Sampling

In the present study, quantitative approach consists of distribution, collecting and analysis of questionnaires. The data is gathered through the structured questionnaire, which was vetted by experienced academicians and industry experts. The items of the questionnaire were adopted from various studies. To examine the relationship between social media marketing, brand performance, brand equity, brand awareness, and brand loyalty. The structured questionnaire was divided into three section, Section A consists close ended questions of demographic details like age, gender, educational qualification, progression, marital status, monthly income. Section B consists of close-ended questions on frequency of staying in five-star/ five-star deluxe hotels, preference of particular brand. Section C consists of a Five-point likert scale used to measure the respondent's perception of constructs from 1) Strongly Agree 2) Agree 3) Neutral 4) Disagree 5) Strongly Disagree. The constructs are social media, brand awareness, brand loyalty, brand image, perceived quality.

The target population was the experienced guests who stayed in the Delhi/NCR hotels in five-star and five-star deluxe hotels. Convenience sampling was adopted to select the respondents. The data is collected from 300 respondents

from direct interaction with the hotel guests who are staying in the hotel and through online questionnaire. (Roscoe, 1975) stated sample size between 30-500 is considered appropriate for the study. Out of 300 questionnaire, 263 valid samples are used for the study, rest 37 responses were rejected as they were not fully filled. The study is descriptive to find out the relationship between social media marketing and brand equity of the hotels.

RESULTS

After the data collection, three methods used for the analysis. Firstly, descriptive statistics was conducted to identify the number of respondents and their gender. Secondly, Reliability test conducted to know about the reliability of the collected data. And for Validity concerns, Confirmatory Factor analysis (CFA) and convergent validity and divergent validity were used. Thirdly, Path analysis conducted to test hypothesis. These tests were conducted using SPSS 21 program and AMOS 26 software.

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

In the data collected, 80% were female and 20% were male and 04% prefers not to disclose their gender identity. 39.2% respondents were between 26-35 years of age; 47.5% were from 18-25 years of age; 9.1% were 36-45 years and 4.2 % were above 45 years. The majority of respondents were post graduate approx. 35% and 33.5% were graduates. Most of the respondents were employed in the private sector.

Table 1

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age	18-25 Years	125	47.5
	26-35 Years	103	39.2
	36-45 Years	24	9.1
	45 Years & Above	11	4.2
	Total	263	100%
Gender	Male	52	19.8
	Female	210	79.8
	Prefer not to say	1	0.4
	Total	263	100%
Education Level	10+2	56	21.3
	Graduation	88	33.5
	Post Graduation	93	35.3
	Doctorate	24	9.1
	Others	2	0.8
	Total	263	100%
Profession	Government Service	23	8.7
	Private Sector	115	43.7
	Self Employed	34	12.9
	Others	91	34.6
	Total	263	100%

Reliability Tests

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics using Cronbach alpha coefficient. The reliable Cronbach alpha must be greater than 0.6. The table below meets all the threshold.

Table 2

Sr. No.	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Social Media	5	.941
2	Brand Awareness	5	.941
3	Brand Loyalty	7	.961
4	Brand Image	5	.971
5	Perceived Quality	4	.975
6	Brand Equity	4	.931

Validity Tests

The scale validity was tested through CR and AVE indices. To test the constructs in this study, CFA was performed.

CFA reflects how well the measured variable represents the constructs. CFA is a good analytical tool for validity testing (Hair, 2010).

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity in the model is calculated by using the factor loadings, CR (Composite Reliability) and AVE (Average Variance Extracted) (Hair, 2011). Cronbach Alpha of all the constructs is above the recommended value which is 0.7. The Composite reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) given in Table 1, exceeds the threshold value (Hair J. R., 2011). These findings confirm the convergent validity of all the constructs.

Discriminant Validity

The measurement model also examines the discriminant validity by evaluating the correlation values. The square root of AVE should be higher than the other correlational values of other variables (Fornell, 1981). Table 3 shows the discriminant validity results; the square root of AVE of each construct is greater than correlation value to fulfill the criterion.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	PQ	SM	BA	BL	BI	BE
PQ	0.948	0.786	0.948					
SM	0.927	0.718	0.846	0.847				
BA	0.965	0.848	0.923	0.822	0.924			
BL	0.947	0.721	0.887	0.816	0.921	0.947		
BI	0.949	0.789	0.830	0.843	0.818	0.849	0.888	
BE	0.916	0.784	0.862	0.768	0.840	0.869	0.861	0.885

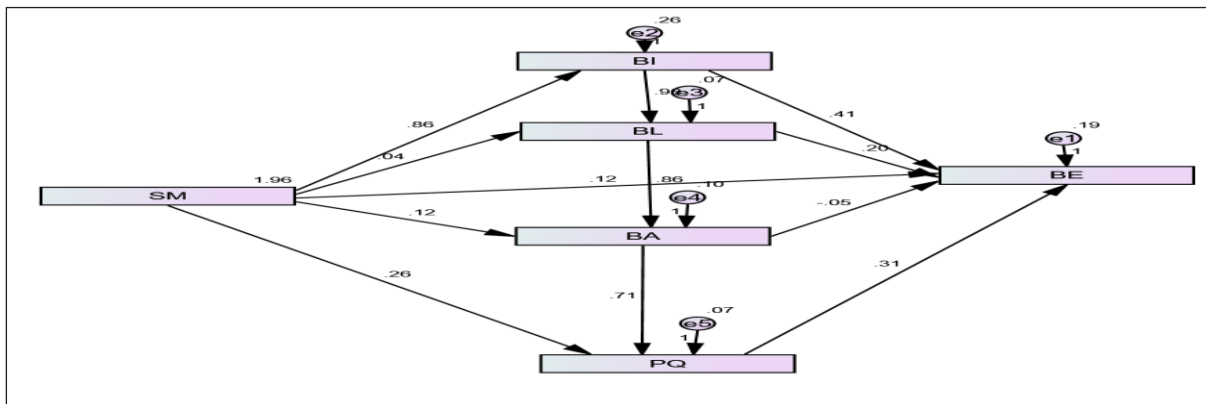


Fig. 2: Path Diagram of Hypothesized Structural Model

Measurement Model Testing

The result of the overall model fit presented in Table 1. It confirms all the parameters' results meet the threshold value. Therefore, the model fit is good (Hair J. B., 2010) RMSEA (Root mean square error of Approximation) is considered

to forecast the sample size issues and the missing standard of chi square. RMSEA value: a close fit ≤ 0.05 , a good fit ≤ 0.08 , CMIN/DF 2.834 confirms the model is good fit (Brown, 1993). Other parameters are RMR, GFI, TLI, which achieves the threshold.

Table 4

GGOF index	Acceptable Value	SEM Model
X2/def.	<3	2.834
GFI	>0.90	.897
TLI	>0.90	.854
CFI	>0.90	.971
RMSEA	≤0.08	.368
RMR	≤0.08	.015

Hypothesis Testing

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) also known as Path Analysis is used to understand the relationship of the

variables whether they are actually interrelated with each other or not. Table 5 shows all the hypothesis were accepted, except Hypothesis 2. Social Media shows a significant impact on Brand Awareness, as shown by the value $\beta = .121$ and p value is 0.000, hence Hypothesis accepted. The path coefficient of social media and brand Loyalty indicates that the social media has no significant impact on the brand loyalty, as shown by the value where $\beta = .038$ and p value is .196, hence Hypothesis 2 rejected. Hypothesis 3, social media has a significant and positive relationship on the Brand Image, where $\beta = .855$ and p value = 0.000, hence supported. Social Media has a positive impact on perceived quality where $\beta = .256$ and p value is 0.000, supports the hypothesis. Social Media has an impact on brand equity, where $\beta = .119$ and p value is .036, hence Hypothesis accepted.

Table 5: Structural Model and Coefficient t Value

Path Line	Hypothesis	β	S.E	C.R	p-Value	Conclusion
SM→BA	H1	.121	.034	3.551	***	Supported
SM→BL	H2	.038	.029	1.294	.196	Rejected
SM→BI	H3	.855	.022	38.301	***	Supported
SM→PQ	H4	.256	.026	9.704	***	Supported
SM→BE	H5	.119	.057	2.098	.036	Supported

DISCUSSION

Social Media accelerates communication between hotels and the guest. The popularity and the wide number of users also make it smooth and quick to convey message. The study gives us the insights about the use of social media marketing in the hotel industry and its importance for a brand to focus on Brand Equity and its Antecedents. Moreover, Social Media Marketing shows a positive impact on Brand Awareness, prime concern for marketing managers. Social Media provides a platform to spread awareness about the hotel products/services, their promotional offers, etc. to the customers. Study also concluded the Impact of social media on the Brand Image of the hotel. The positive image of the brand left strong footprint in consumer's mind which persuaded customer for purchase or repurchase. The strong impact of social media on the perceived quality of the brand will also get impacted and hotel gets huge response from the customers. Therefore, Overall Brand equity will also be strengthened with the social media marketing communication tool.

Hotels should invest in social media marketing to develop a plan to communicate with customers, to answer questions to their queries and provide feedback to improve reputation in the market. The online platforms of social media provide information which influences consumer purchase decision, which draws the attention of marketing managers to deliver fresh, latest, and relevant content to their users. The social

media promotes the experience and opinion sharing, recommendations among customers, ultimately contributes to WOM (Ebrahim, 2019). Social media marketing is associated with the customer relationship marketing targeting to connect with customers (Knoblich, 2017) produces brand value to the business (Chahal, 2017). The insignificant result of social media marketing towards brand loyalty shows that there is no direct relation between social media marketing and repeat purchase (Eren-Erdogmus, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Social Media is a contemporary way of communicating to their consumers. Lately, most of the businesses have adopted social media marketing to reach consumers to share their information regarding products, discounts, offers, advertisements, etc. The current study conducted to determine the effectiveness of social media on brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty, perceived quality. The results of the study reported the direct impact of social media marketing on brand awareness. However, Brand loyalty have no significance on the social media marketing, (Abdulla H. Fetais, 2022) also concluded where no direct influence found on Brand Loyalty of social media marketing. Perceived quality and Brand Image have positive impact on the social media. Whereas social media marketing has impact on the Overall Brand Equity have impact on the social media but not significant, (Haudi Haudi, 2022) also confirms the influence of social media marketing on the brand equity.

The practical implications of the study are as follows: Firstly, there is limited literature available on social media marketing in the hospitality industry. The current study contributes to establishing a relationship between social media marketing and brand equity and its dimension in the hospitality industry of Delhi/NCR. Study also highlighted the value of brand awareness, brand image and perceived quality. The study provides the direction to marketing managers to utilize social media platforms to build strong brand equity.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

This study has few limitations as only the hotels of Delhi/NCR and only the five-star and five-star deluxe category of hotel considered for the research. Maybe, the results will be different for the other category of hotels. The results cannot be generalized however, to increase the generalizability of the study, future research can consider another region. Secondly, study has considered only the social media marketing, Other traditional marketing tools like advertisement, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing can also be studied to determine the relationship between tools and the brand equity. Thirdly, the sample size can also be increased to get better results. Particular Brand of the hotel can also be considered to find out the marketing strategies.

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