

ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON GUESTS HOTEL SELECTION

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ABSTRACT

Background: *Hotel guests are ultimately seeking the best qualities to receive satisfactory and comfortable facilities during their stay and how internet and technology has fundamentally changed guests behaviour and their decision making processes for accommodation selection. In this era of digital development in technology guest have access to information through communication channels that are very much available at fingertips. Thus, the present study focuses on analysing the impact of social media marketing on guest's hotel selection for a comfortable and satisfactory stay.* **Objectives:** *The objectives of the study were identification of social media marketing tools used by the different hotels and the impact of social media marketing on guest's selection of hotel.* **Methodology:** *The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms and responses were collected from 120 respondents from the state of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.* **Results:** *Most influential features on social media marketing in Guests selection of Hotel with 48% of responses are Location of the hotel (country, city, place etc.), Online Reviews & Feedback (40%) and Unique Selling Proposition of the hotel with 37% of responses (Special features).* **Conclusion:** *Social media marketing plays a pivotal role for hotels and business to build trust and establish credibility with their guests. In today's scenario and age, it is a common tool for guests to research about hotels while choosing an accommodation and this is the reason, why social media marketing tools are so important.*

Key Words: *Social Media Marketing, Hotel, Guest, Selection*

INTRODUCTION

In this era of digitalization the businesses have moved ahead with the use of Digital Marketing. Using digital channels and the online platforms available to promote the business through marketing activities is digital marketing social media and online marketing are both subsets of digital marketing. Marketing through website, SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SMM (Social Media Marketing), video marketing, content marketing etc, comes under the umbrella of Digital Marketing. 10-15 years ago people did not spend half as much time online as they do today, what this means for marketers is that they need to put more effort in online marketing whereas, offline marketing was the only focused channel in the previous time.

Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content.” Marketing through social media marketing is the need of the time as majority of the population is involved in using any of the social media platforms to communicate to their near and dear ones, apart from connecting to the official work. It becomes easy for the business to attract potential guest as well as to retain the existing ones, with the use of social media platforms available across the internet. Social media marketing is one of the important tools of digital marketing by which the business can attract the guest in the establishment as continuous advertisement of business on social media platform will lead to a positive result for the business. Social media platforms can be used to get in touch with the audience to build brand, increase revenue and also decrease the website traffic which will result in smooth functioning of the website. A good website today is a prerequisite before establishing a business online. It helps your business transcend geographical boundaries to reach newer prospects, but also work as digital destinations for your consumers who can access it round the clock without any hassle.

Social media marketing plays an important role in this time of digitalization as more and more people are moving towards the use of internet and technology and with this they tend to come across the businesses on different platforms, from where they can make selection regarding the particular business.

Social media enables firms to communicate with their customers and also allows customers to communicate with each other (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media marketing is different than traditional methods of marketing; therefore, it requires special attention and strategy building to achieve brand image and loyalty. Social media marketing is related to relationship marketing, where the firms need to shift from “trying to sell” to “making connections” with the consumers (Gordhamer, 2009).

When referring to social media, three aspects often come to mind: 1) Web 2.0; 2) websites that facilitate networking and marketing (Gurney et al., 2004; Vila & Kuster, 2004); and 3) the huge volume of information propagation (Willi et al., 2013). Social media have been widely adopted by travellers to search, organize, share, and annotate their travel stories and experiences through blogs and micro blogs (e.g., Blogger and Twitter), online communities (e.g., Facebook, RenRen, and TripAdvisor), media sharing sites (e.g., Flickr and YouTube), social bookmarking sites (e.g., Delicious), social knowledge sharing sites (e.g., Wikitravel), and other tools in a collaborative way (Leung et al., 2013).

Some of the social media platforms are:

Youtube: YouTube is a site where users can upload, share and watch videos, and is the global leader in the video streaming market, with over a billion videos viewed every day. YouTube went public in December 2005 (YouTube, 2009) and in this short time, has experienced an astounding level of growth. **Facebook:** Threatt (2009) suggested that the site can be referred to as a social media portal, with organizations and businesses creating profiles to disseminate information about products and services, shifting the focus from creating personal relationships to reaching customers. **Whatsapp:** WhatsApp marketing is that the interaction between those that create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. WhatsApp marketing uses mobile and web-based technologies to create an interactive platform for people and communities to share, co-author, discuss and modify user-generated content (Begam, 2020). **Instagram:** Video content offers another unique method through which brands and destinations can communicate and reach users in Instagram. Video content is increasing on Instagram and with the introduction of the story function, sharing videos has gained more popularity within the users (Terttunen, 2017). **Twitter:** Twitter’s greatest potential for organisations is, arguably, for external communication with customers, but very few peer-reviewed studies have analysed this usage: in this context, Twitter has been described as a tool to create electronic word of mouth (Jansen et al., 2009), as a viral marketing mechanism (Asur & Huberman, 2010) and as a form of online word of mouth branding (Jansen et al., 2009).

Social media have already been recognized as new forms of word-of-mouth communication which is highly influential on consumers' decision making process (Hills & Cairncross, 2011).

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify the social media marketing tools that influences guests' selection of hotel for their stay.
- To study the impact of features of hotel on social media marketing affecting guests' selection of hotel for their stay.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The research design is cross – sectional.

Locale: The research was done in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Sampling Design: The data for the present research paper was collected from the guests who visited different hotels in India. The age range of the respondent is 18 to 60 years.

Tools and Technique: Digital platform Google form was used for the development and distribution of questionnaire to the respondents. The structured questionnaire was framed with closed-ended questions and was filled up by the respondents in the month of November and December, 2020. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section consisted information on the demographic profile of hotels guest. The second section consisted of closed ended questions on the impact of features of hotel on Social media marketing on consumers selection of hotel for their stay on a Likert Scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is Strongly Disagree, 2 is Disagree, 3 Neutral, 4 Agree and 5 is Strongly Agree.

Data and Statistical Analysis: The primary sources of data collection was structured questionnaire and secondary sources of information were national and international journals, Government reports, published research articles, theses, books, websites, magazines, newspapers, etc. Weighted Mean method was used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

To fulfil the objectives of present work, a structured questionnaire was distributed through online platform i.e. Google Forms to 150 respondents in the month of November and December, 2020. 120 out of 150 respondents had filled and submitted the questionnaire. Table 1 illustrates the demographic profile of guests of different hotels. The obtained data shows that majority of the respondents were males (70.8%). The surveyed population between the age group of 18 to 40 years were recorded 88.3% and 10% of surveyed population were of the age group between 41 to 60 years. The surveyed statistics shows that 81.7% of respondents were unmarried and 18.3% are married. The respondents who were surveyed sums to 55% as undergraduate, 19.2% graduate, 19.2% postgraduate and 0.8% of the respondents having doctorate degree. The surveyed statistics shows that 83.3% of the respondents reside in urban area, whereas 16.7% resided in rural area. The surveyed statistics shows that 68.3% of respondents were students, 13.3% of respondents were in Government job, 16.7% respondents were working in private sector and 1.7% of respondents are running their business. 64.2% of respondents were not earning, 6.7% of the respondents were having an annual income of less than 3 lakhs, 25% between 3 to 10 lakhs and 4.2% of respondents were having an annual income of more than 10 lakhs.

Identification of the social media marketing tools that influences guests' selection of hotel for their stay

The first objective of the study was to identify the social media marketing tools that influence guests' selection of hotel for their stay and this objective has been achieved with the review of past literature. From the review of previous researches on social media marketing on hotels it has been found that Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat etc. were the various social media marketing tools used by the hotels to attract potential guests and convert them into actual guests who opt for their hotel regarding their accommodation.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables		Number (%) (n)
Gender	Male	85(70.8%)
	Female	35 (29.2%)
Age	18-40 years	106 (88.3%)
	41-60 years	12 (10.0%)
	Above 60 years	2 (1.7%)
Marital Status	Unmarried	98 (81.7%)
	Married	22 (18.3%)
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	66 (55.0%)
	Graduate	23 (19.2%)
	Postgraduate	23 (19.2%)
	Doctorate	1 (0.8%)
	Others	7 (5.8%)
Area of Residence	Urban	100 (83.3%)
	Rural	20 (16.7%)
Occupation/Profession	Student	82 (68.3%)
	Government Job	16 (13.3%)
	Private Job	20 (16.7%)
	Business	2 (1.7%)
	Retired	0
Annual Income	Not Earning	77 (64.2%)
	Less than 3 Lakh	8 (6.7%)
	3-10 Lakhs	30 (25.0%)
	More than 10 Lakhs	5 (4.2%)

Analysis of the impact of features of hotel on social media marketing affecting guests selection of hotel for their stay.

As per the responses of guests of different hotels, location of the hotel (country, city, place etc.) on the social media marketing has been ranked first in terms of guest's selection of hotel, followed by online reviews & Feedback. Unique selling proposition of the hotel (special features) has been ranked third, promotion and price information of hotel on social media marketing has been ranked fourth and pictorial representation of hotel facilities on social media marketing has been ranked fifth in influencing the guest selection of hotel.

The least influential features of hotels on social media marketing influencing the guest's selection of hotels are availability of contact information, link to the websites for room reservation option and upcoming events & entertainment information.

Table 2: Analyzing the features of hotel on social media marketing influencing the guests hotel selection

Features of Hotel on SMM (Social Media Marketing) which influences your hotel selection.	Total	Weighted Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
Location of the hotel (country, city, place etc.)	120	490	4.08	I
Pictorial Representation of Hotel's Facilities	120	457	3.81	V
Online Reviews & Feedback	120	469	3.91	II
Unique Selling Proposition of the Hotel (Special features)	120	468	3.90	III
Link to the Websites for Room Reservation Option	120	445	3.71	VII
Upcoming Events & Entertainment Information	120	434	3.62	VIII
Availability of Contact Information on SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING	120	450	3.75	VI
Promotions & Price Information	120	467	3.89	IV

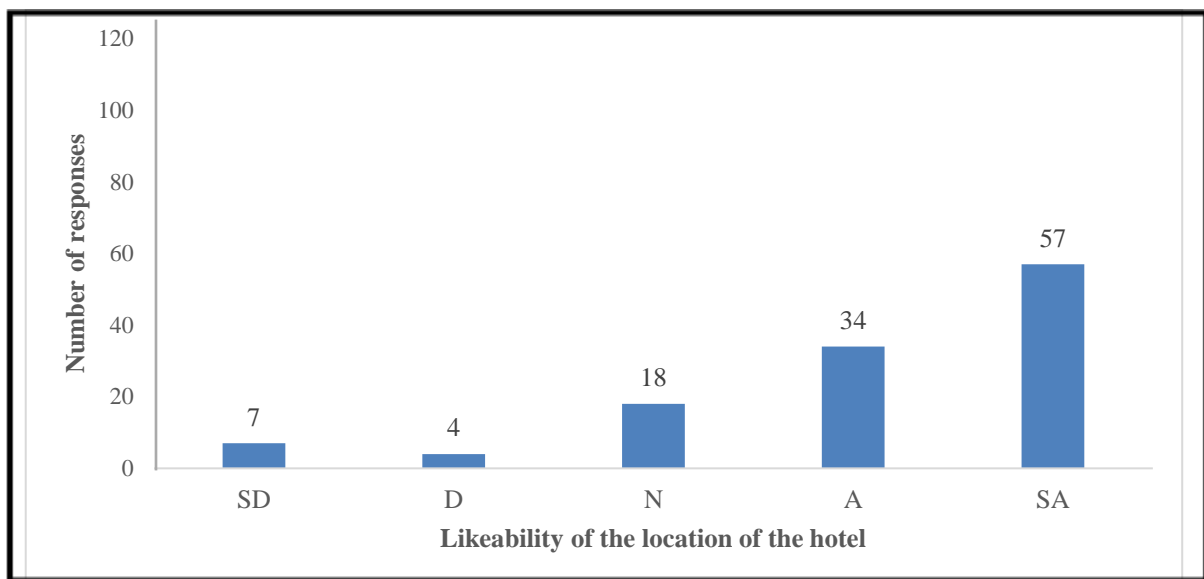


Figure 1: Location of the hotel

48% of the respondents strongly agree that the location of the hotel on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

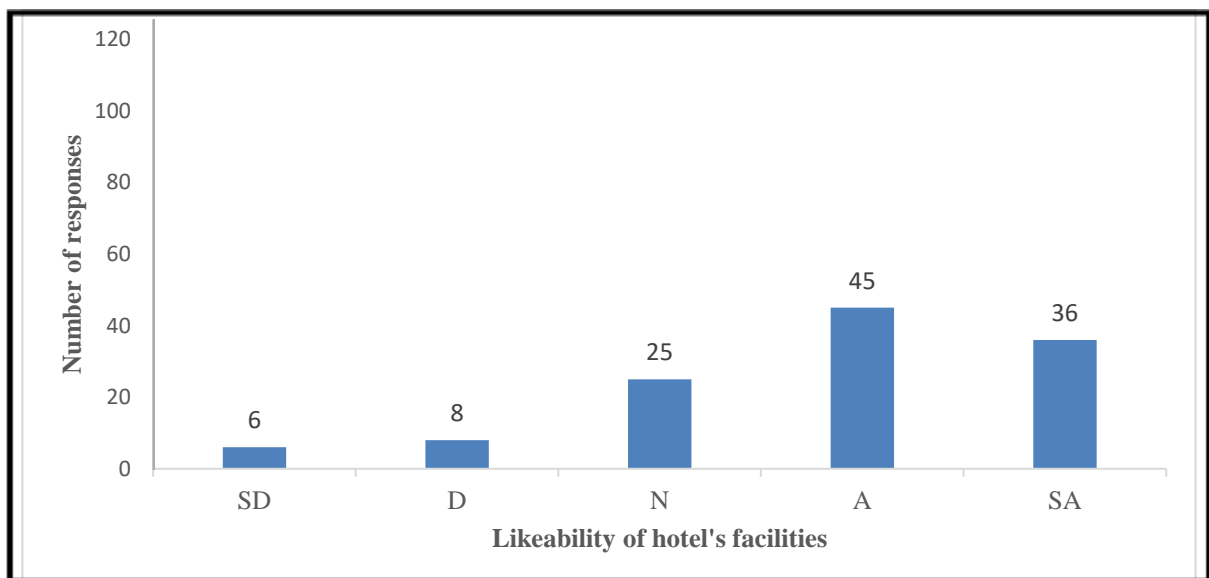


Figure 2: Pictorial representation of hotel's facilities

37% of the respondents agree that the pictorial representation of hotel facilities on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

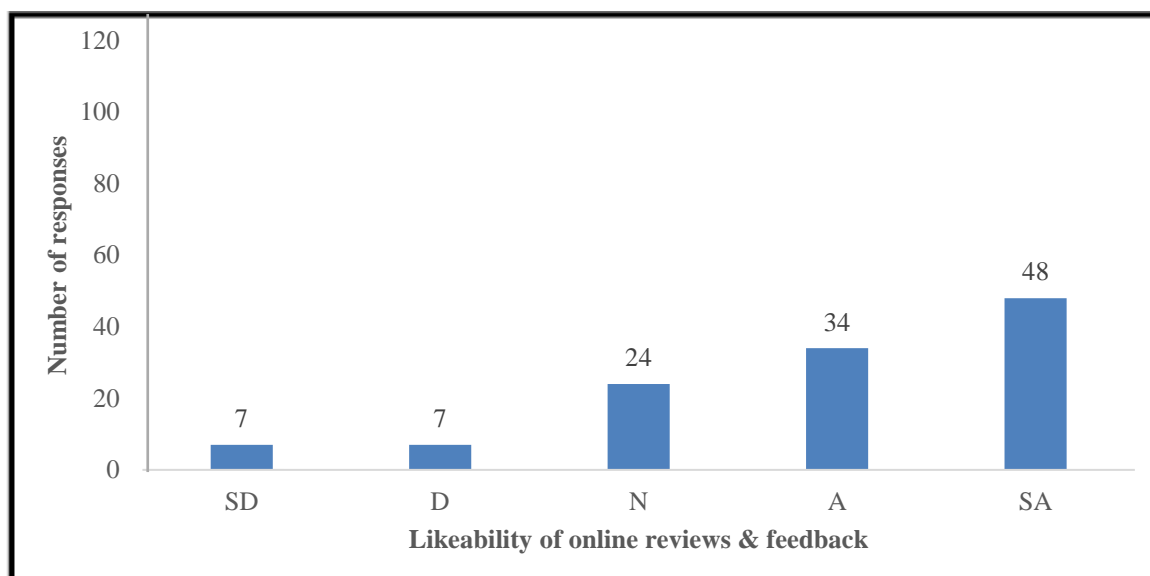


Figure 3: Online reviews and feedback

40% of the respondents strongly agree that online reviews & feedback of the hotel on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

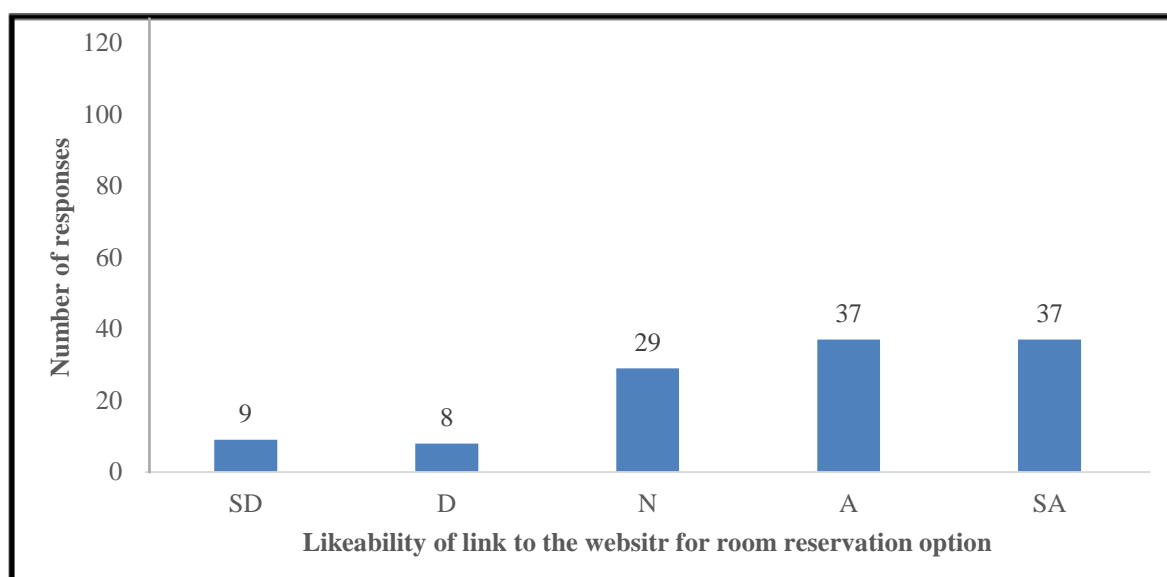


Figure 4: Unique selling proposition of the hotel (special features)

37% of the respondents agree that unique selling proposition of the hotel (special features) on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

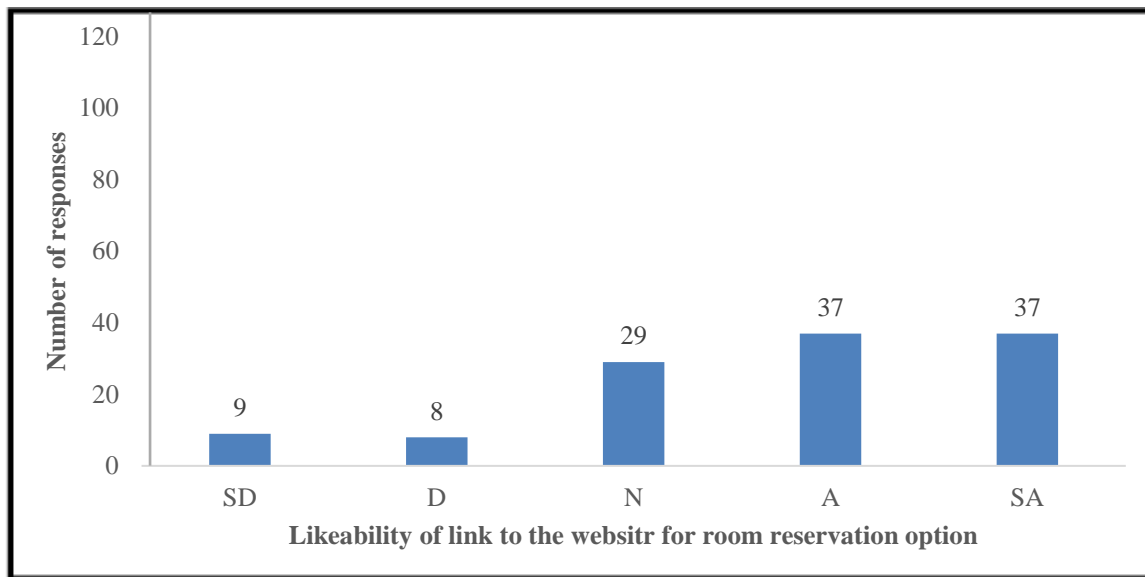


Figure 5: Link to the websites for room reservation option

31% of the respondents strongly agree and the same percentage of respondents agree that link to the websites for room reservation option of the hotel on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

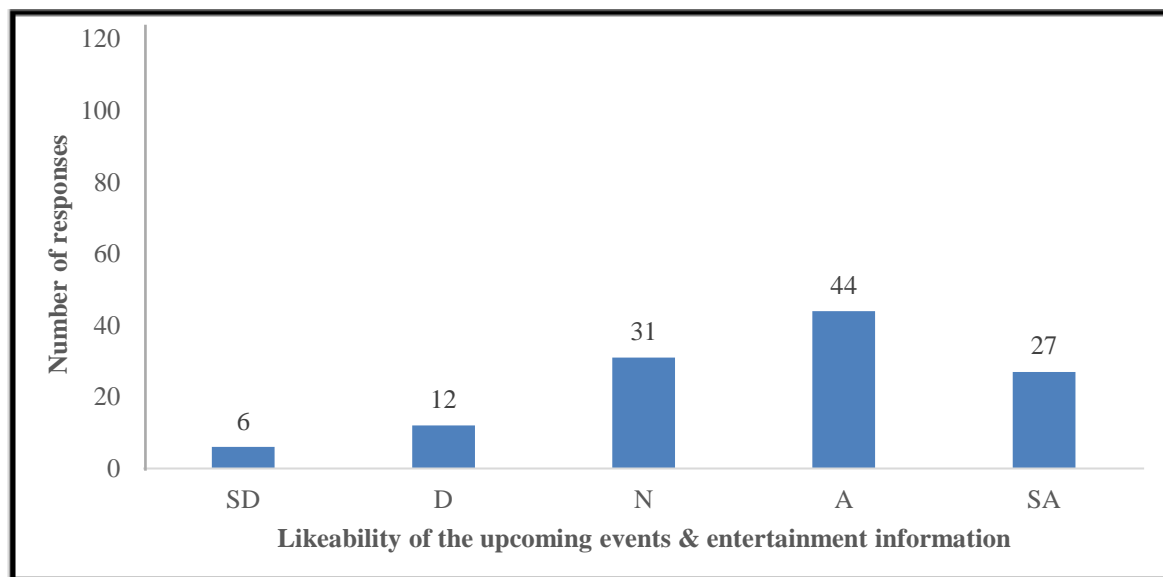


Figure 6: Upcoming events and entertainment information

37% of the respondents agree that upcoming events & entertainment information of the hotel on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

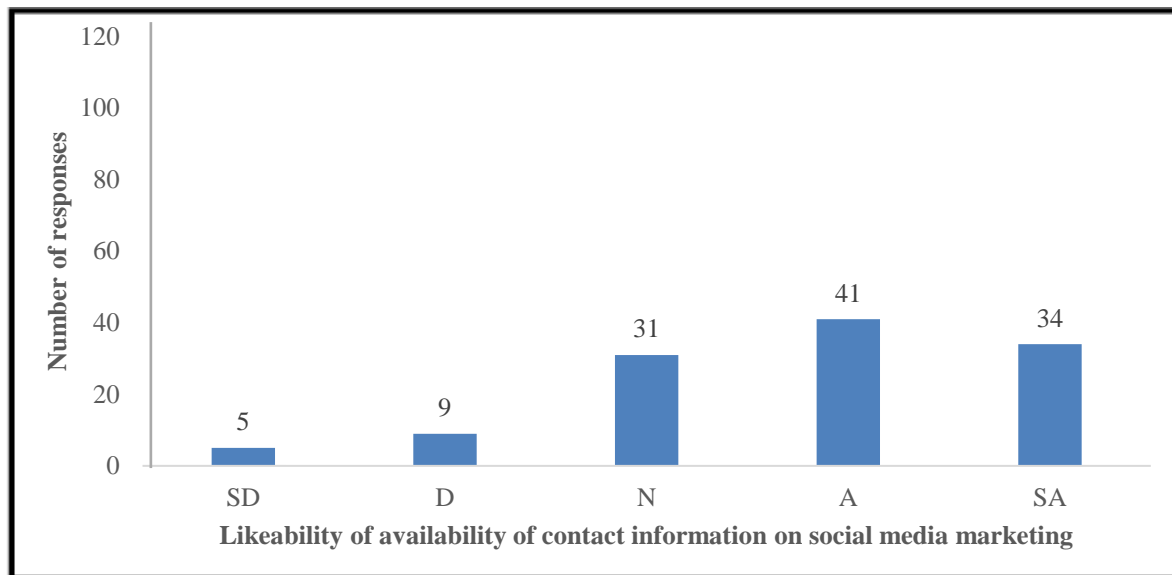


Figure 7: Availability of contact information on social media marketing

34% of the respondents agree that availability of contact information of the hotel on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

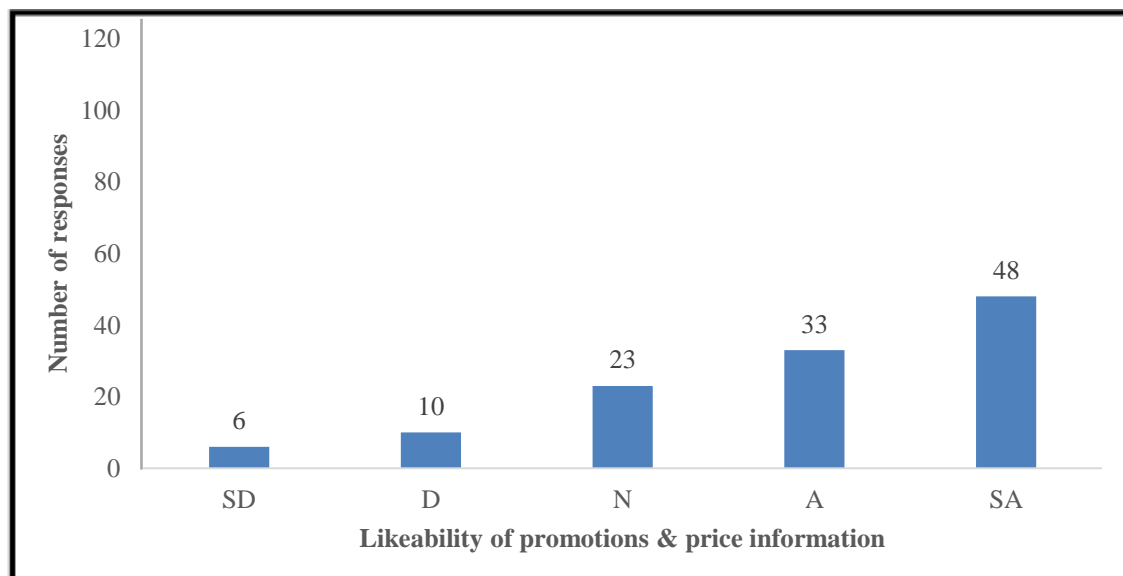


Figure 8: Promotions and price information

40% of the respondents strongly agree that promotions & price information of the hotel's facilities on the social media marketing influences their hotel choice for accommodation.

CONCLUSION

The first objective of the study was to identify which influences guests' selection of hotel. From the review of previous researches on social media marketing it has been found that Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter are the common social media marketing tools used in making decision regarding the stay. The second objective of the study was to analyze the influence of features of hotel on social media marketing on guest's selection of hotel. Most influential features of hotels on social media marketing in guest's selection of hotels are location of the Hotel, online reviews & feedback and unique selling proposition of the hotel (Special features).

This study will be helpful to the academicians of the Hospitality & Tourism Sector and to the academicians in the field of social media marketing. This study will also encourage researchers to add more in the field of social media marketing in Hotels. This study will also be of great help to the Sales & Marketing professionals as they can work on their existing social media marketing strategies and can improve them in the more effective manner to suit the requirement of various segments of guests. This study will also be helpful to the hotels guests as it will improve the social media marketing strategies of the hotel.

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