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**The Role of Social Media Marketing in Shaping Customer Perceptions of Modern Hospitality Brands in Ghana**



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## The Role of Social Media Marketing in Shaping Customer Perceptions of Modern Hospitality Brands in Ghana



 <sup>1\*</sup> Anthony Malik

Catholic University of Ghana

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** The main objective of this study was to investigate the role of social media marketing in shaping customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands.

**Methodology:** The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

**Findings:** The findings revealed that there exists a contextual and methodological gap relating to the role of social media marketing in shaping customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands. Preliminary empirical review revealed that in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the study underscores the importance of adaptability and innovation within the realm of social media marketing for modern hospitality brands. By staying attuned to customer preferences and continuously refining their strategies, these brands can not only shape but also elevate customer perceptions, thereby gaining a competitive edge and fostering long-term success in the hospitality industry. As technology and consumer behavior continue to evolve, future research in this area will be essential to further understand the intricate dynamics of social media marketing's influence on customer perceptions and its implications for the modern hospitality sector

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The Social Identity theory, Information Processing theory and Two Step Flow theory may be used to anchor future studies on social media marketing in modern hospitality. The study recommended for a cohesive social media branding strategy, engaging actively and responsively with customers, leveraging user-generated content and social proof, investing in visual and interactive content, collaborating with social media influencers, monitoring and analyzing social media and adapting to emerging trends and platforms.

**Keywords:** *Social Media Marketing, Customer Perceptions, Modern Hospitality Brands, Brand Image, Online Reputation*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in the USA play a crucial role in the success and competitiveness of the hospitality industry. These perceptions encompass a wide range of factors, including the brand's reputation, service quality, value for money, and overall guest experiences. According to Lee & Back (2019), the United States has witnessed a significant shift in customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in recent years. For instance, there has been a growing emphasis on personalized experiences and sustainability initiatives, with guests increasingly valuing eco-friendly practices and unique, locally inspired offerings.

One aspect of customer perceptions in modern hospitality brands is the importance of online reviews and social media influence. Vermeulen & Seegers (2019) highlighted that 93% of travelers in the USA trust online reviews when making decisions about accommodations. This statistic underscores the influence of customer-generated content on perceptions of hospitality brands. For example, a hotel with consistently positive reviews on platforms like TripAdvisor or Yelp is more likely to be perceived positively by potential guests, contributing to higher occupancy rates and revenue.

Furthermore, the concept of loyalty and brand trust plays a significant role in customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in the USA. A survey conducted by Deloitte (2020) found that 78% of U.S. travelers are more likely to book with a brand they trust, even if it's not the cheapest option. This highlights the importance of building and maintaining a strong brand image in the eyes of customers. For example, a well-established hotel chain with a history of providing exceptional service and value is likely to enjoy a positive perception and higher customer loyalty.

Another critical dimension of customer perceptions in modern hospitality brands is the response to technological innovations. The advent of smartphone apps, contactless check-in, and smart room amenities has reshaped guest expectations. According to a report by Statista (2020), 57% of U.S. travelers found mobile check-in to be essential. Hotels that invest in and effectively implement such technologies tend to be perceived as more modern, convenient, and guest-centric. Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in the USA are multifaceted and influenced by a combination of factors, including online reviews, brand trust, sustainability efforts, and technological innovations. These perceptions significantly impact the choices travelers make when selecting accommodations and can ultimately determine a brand's success in a competitive marketplace.

Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in the UK are influenced by a combination of factors, including the brand's reputation, service quality, pricing, and its engagement in social media marketing. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in how customers perceive and interact with hospitality brands due to the increasing influence of digital platforms and online reviews. According to O'Neill & Xiao (2016), customer perceptions play a crucial role in the decision-making process when choosing hospitality services in the UK. These perceptions can significantly impact a brand's success in the highly competitive hospitality market.

One aspect of customer perceptions that has gained prominence is the role of online reviews and ratings. Customers increasingly rely on platforms like TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google Reviews to evaluate hospitality brands. Xiang, Du, Ma & Fan (2017) found that 95% of UK travelers read online reviews before making a booking decision. Positive reviews and high ratings can enhance a brand's reputation and influence potential customers. Conversely, negative reviews can lead to a poor perception of the brand. For example, a well-reviewed boutique hotel in London might enjoy a strong positive perception among travelers, leading to increased bookings and revenue.

Another critical aspect of customer perceptions in the UK is the emphasis on sustainability and responsible business practices. Modern hospitality brands that demonstrate a commitment to environmental and social responsibility tend to be viewed more favorably by consumers. According

to a report by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2019), the UK's tourism industry has been increasingly focused on sustainability, with 70% of UK travelers considering environmental factors when choosing a travel destination. For instance, a hotel chain in the UK that adopts eco-friendly practices, such as reducing plastic waste and conserving energy, may gain a more positive perception among environmentally conscious customers.

Furthermore, the role of social media marketing in shaping customer perceptions cannot be underestimated. Li & Wang (2019) highlighted the significant impact of social media engagement on brand image in the UK hospitality industry. Brands that effectively utilize platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to engage with customers, share appealing content, and respond to inquiries tend to create a more positive perception among their followers. For instance, a popular restaurant in Edinburgh may use Instagram to showcase its mouthwatering dishes and engage with customers through posts and stories, thereby influencing how potential diners perceive the brand. Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in the UK are influenced by various factors, including online reviews, sustainability initiatives, and social media marketing. These perceptions have a substantial impact on customer choices and can determine a brand's success in a highly competitive market. Brands that prioritize positive online reviews, sustainability practices, and effective social media engagement can cultivate a more favorable perception among customers, ultimately leading to increased bookings and revenue.

Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands play a pivotal role in the success and competitiveness of the global hospitality industry. These perceptions encompass a wide range of factors, including the brand's reputation, service quality, authenticity, and social responsibility. In today's digital age, where consumers have easy access to information and social media platforms, these perceptions are often influenced by a brand's online presence and marketing efforts. In Japan, a country known for its unique blend of tradition and modernity, customer perceptions of hospitality brands are particularly important as they reflect the evolving preferences and expectations of both domestic and international travelers.

One prominent aspect of customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in Japan is the influence of the traditional concept of "Omotenashi." Omotenashi represents the art of Japanese hospitality, characterized by warm, anticipatory service, attention to detail, and a focus on guest satisfaction. Hospitality brands that successfully incorporate Omotenashi principles into their service offerings tend to receive favorable customer perceptions. For example, the renowned luxury ryokan, Hoshinoya Kyoto, has gained international acclaim for its commitment to Omotenashi, which includes personalized service, traditional architecture, and kaiseki dining experiences. According to Kato & Prebezac (2017), such establishments that adhere to Omotenashi principles have witnessed a significant increase in positive customer reviews, contributing to their brand perception.

In the digital era, customer perceptions of hospitality brands in Japan are greatly influenced by online reviews and social media platforms. Travelers often rely on websites like TripAdvisor and review platforms like Yelp to read about the experiences of others before making booking decisions. These online reviews not only reflect the quality of service but also the overall perception of a brand. For instance, Chan, Yamamoto & Chiang (2016) highlights that Japanese hotels with a higher number of positive online reviews tend to attract more guests and can charge premium prices. Moreover, active engagement on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, allows brands to showcase their unique offerings, attracting customers by portraying a certain lifestyle or experience.

In recent years, customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in Japan have been increasingly shaped by sustainability and authenticity considerations. Travelers, both domestic and international, are placing greater importance on environmentally responsible practices and authentic cultural experiences. As a result, hospitality brands that incorporate sustainable initiatives, such as eco-friendly



construction, local sourcing of ingredients, and reduced carbon footprints, are viewed more favorably. Han, Yun & Ryu (2019) indicated that hotels in Japan that have received eco-certifications or those that emphasize local cultural experiences have witnessed an upward trend in customer bookings and positive reviews, reflecting changing consumer values and preferences.

Customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in Sub-Saharan countries have evolved significantly in recent years, influenced by various factors such as globalization, technological advancements, and changing consumer preferences. These perceptions encompass a range of aspects, including service quality, brand reputation, sustainability practices, and cultural relevance. For instance, Okumus & Karamustafa (2015) highlighted that in Sub-Saharan Africa, customer perceptions of hospitality brands are strongly influenced by the perceived quality of services, with guests placing high importance on factors like cleanliness, comfort, and responsiveness of staff. Positive perceptions in these areas often lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Furthermore, customers in Sub-Saharan countries increasingly consider the sustainability practices of modern hospitality brands. According to a report by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2018), a growing number of travelers in the region value eco-friendly initiatives and social responsibility efforts by hospitality brands. For instance, hotels and lodges in Kenya, such as Saruni Lodges and Sasaab Lodge, have gained recognition for their sustainability practices, including wildlife conservation and community engagement, which positively influence customer perceptions.

Another dimension of customer perceptions in Sub-Saharan Africa relates to the cultural relevance and authenticity of hospitality brands. Nyaupane & Andereck (2008) pointed out that tourists visiting Sub-Saharan countries often seek authentic experiences that allow them to connect with local cultures. As a result, hospitality brands that incorporate traditional elements, such as Maasai-inspired lodges in Tanzania or Zulu-themed resorts in South Africa, tend to receive favorable customer perceptions for their ability to provide unique and culturally immersive experiences.

Moreover, technology and online presence play a significant role in shaping customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands in Sub-Saharan countries. In a digital age, travelers increasingly rely on online reviews and social media to gather information and assess the quality of hospitality services. Adongo & Boateng (2017) found that online reviews significantly influence hotel selection decisions in Ghana, illustrating the importance of a positive online reputation for hospitality brands in the region. Therefore, managing online reviews and maintaining a strong online presence has become crucial for establishing favorable customer perceptions.

Social media marketing is a multifaceted digital marketing strategy that utilizes various social media platforms to promote products, services, or brands to a targeted audience. It involves creating and sharing content on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to engage with users, build brand awareness, and drive customer engagement. Social media marketing has become increasingly important in the hospitality industry, as it offers a powerful means to connect with customers and shape their perceptions of modern hospitality brands (Smith & Zook, 2011).

Firstly, social media marketing allows hospitality brands to establish a strong online presence and engage with their audience in real-time. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable hotels, restaurants, and resorts to share updates, respond to customer queries, and address concerns promptly. Through active engagement, brands can foster a sense of trust and accessibility, which positively influences customer perceptions (Agha, 2019).

Secondly, social media marketing provides an avenue for storytelling and brand narrative. Through visual content, such as photos and videos, hospitality brands can showcase their unique features, cultural experiences, and sustainability initiatives. Storytelling on social media platforms allows brands to create emotional connections with customers, shaping their perceptions and fostering a sense

of authenticity (Kim & Kim, 2018). Moreover, user-generated content (UGC) plays a pivotal role in social media marketing for hospitality brands. When guests share their experiences through reviews, photos, and videos on platforms like TripAdvisor, Instagram, and YouTube, it provides authentic and peer-endorsed content that potential customers trust. Hospitality brands can leverage UGC to reinforce positive perceptions and build credibility (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016).

Furthermore, social media marketing facilitates targeted advertising and personalized content delivery. By using data analytics and demographic information, hospitality brands can tailor their marketing messages to specific customer segments. For instance, a luxury hotel may create different content for honeymooners and business travelers, ensuring that customers receive relevant and appealing information, thus influencing their perceptions and decision-making (Li & Bernoff, 2011).

Additionally, social media marketing enables hospitality brands to gather valuable customer insights and feedback. Through social listening tools, brands can monitor conversations, trends, and sentiments related to their services. This data can be used to identify areas for improvement, adapt marketing strategies, and align offerings with customer expectations, ultimately impacting customer perceptions positively (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In conclusion, social media marketing is a dynamic and influential tool in the modern hospitality industry, allowing brands to engage with customers, share compelling narratives, leverage user-generated content, deliver personalized messages, and gather valuable insights. These aspects of social media marketing collectively shape customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands, influencing their attitudes, loyalty, and decision-making processes.

Modern hospitality brands in Ghana are emerging as key players in the tourism and hospitality industry, which is one of the fastest growing sectors in the national economy. These brands offer high-quality services and facilities to both domestic and international travellers, catering to their diverse needs and preferences. Some of the modern hospitality brands in Ghana include Hilton, Movenpick, Kempinski, Ibis Styles, Windy Lodge and others. These brands have invested in various regions of Ghana, such as Greater Accra, Central, Ashanti and Northern regions, enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of these destinations. According to Statista (2022), Movenpick Ambassador in Greater Accra was the largest hotel in Ghana, with 260 rooms, followed by Windy Lodge in Central region, with 185 rooms. Modern hospitality brands in Ghana face some challenges, such as low standards of service delivery by some low-scale facilities, inadequate infrastructure, high taxes and fees, and competition from other African countries. However, they also have some prospects, such as increasing demand for tourism and hospitality services, government support and incentives, rich cultural and natural heritage, and innovation and creativity (Dayour, 2020). Modern hospitality brands in Ghana are therefore poised to contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the country and the continent at large.

Social media marketing is a powerful tool for modern hospitality brands in Ghana to communicate their value proposition, engage with their target audience, and influence their purchase decisions. According to Agyei and Boateng (2019), social media marketing can shape customer perceptions of hospitality brands by enhancing their online reputation, creating positive word-of-mouth, and building trust and loyalty. Therefore, hospitality brands in Ghana should leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to showcase their unique offerings, share customer testimonials, and interact with potential and existing customers.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The hospitality industry has witnessed a significant shift in recent years with the proliferation of social media platforms. Customers increasingly turn to platforms like Instagram, TripAdvisor, and Twitter to share their experiences, access information, and seek recommendations regarding hotels, restaurants, and resorts. However, while the significance of social media marketing in shaping

customer perceptions is widely acknowledged, there is a noticeable gap in empirical research exploring the precise mechanisms through which social media marketing influences these perceptions. According to a report by Statista (2021), 72% of travelers globally used social media for travel inspiration in 2020. Despite this trend, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that delve into the nuances of how social media marketing strategies impact customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the specific strategies and content types within social media marketing that have the most substantial influence on customer perceptions. The intended audience for this study includes both academia and industry practitioners within the field of hospitality and marketing. Academics will benefit from the empirical evidence generated by this research, contributing to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between social media marketing and customer perceptions. Industry practitioners, including marketing managers and executives in the modern hospitality sector, can gain actionable insights into optimizing their social media strategies to shape positive customer perceptions effectively. By identifying the most impactful elements of social media marketing in this context, this study seeks to provide practical recommendations that will assist hospitality brands in improving their online presence and customer engagement strategies.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

#### **2.1.1 Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, focuses on how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, which in turn influences their attitudes and behaviors. This theory is highly relevant to the study of "The Role of Social Media Marketing in Shaping Customer Perceptions of Modern Hospitality Brands" because it helps us understand how social media can serve as a platform for customers to identify with and connect to specific hospitality brands. Customers often follow, engage with, and advocate for brands on social media that align with their self-identities or desired social image. Therefore, by investigating the role of social media marketing in fostering a sense of belonging or identification with a hospitality brand, researchers can gain insights into how customer perceptions are shaped through these online interactions.

#### **2.1.2 Information Processing Theory**

Information Processing Theory, initially proposed by Craik and Lockhart (1972), explores how individuals encode, store, and retrieve information. In the context of social media marketing and hospitality brands, this theory is relevant because it helps us understand how customers process the vast amount of information they encounter online. Social media platforms are inundated with content from various brands, making it crucial to investigate how customers cognitively process and retain information about modern hospitality brands. Researchers can explore how the design, content, and frequency of social media marketing efforts impact the encoding and retrieval processes of customer perceptions, ultimately shaping their attitudes and decisions regarding these brands.

#### **2.1.3 Two-Step Flow Theory**

The Two-Step Flow Theory, developed by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), suggests that information flows from media to opinion leaders or influencers, who then disseminate it to a wider audience. This theory is relevant to the study of social media marketing and hospitality brands because it highlights the role of intermediaries or influential users on social media platforms. By examining the dynamics between hospitality brands, their online influencers, and the broader customer base, researchers can gain insights into how social media marketing campaigns are amplified or modified through these opinion leaders. Understanding how information is filtered and transmitted through this two-step process can

help researchers assess the impact of social media marketing efforts on customer perceptions and decision-making within the modern hospitality industry.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

Kim, Lim & Brymer (2015) investigated benefit factors of member participation and the relationships between community participation, brand trust, and brand commitment in hotel and restaurant online communities. Data were collected from online panel and alumni of Iowa State University. Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were used to test the conceptual model. Four benefit factors (functional, hedonic, monetary, and social-psychological benefits) were identified as the predictors of member participation in hotel and restaurant Facebook fan pages. Member participation positively influenced their trust toward a hotel or restaurant brand. Biological gender had a significant moderating effect on the relationship between functional benefits and community participation in the hotel study. Hospitality firms should provide various benefits to attract and retain members in their online communities. They should also consider the demographic characteristics of their target audience when designing their social media marketing strategies.

Smith (2023) aimed provide actionable tips from hospitality brands that are taking customer satisfaction to the next level on social media. Methodology: Case studies of three hospitality brands (Vail Resorts, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, and Airbnb) that are using social media to create memorable guest experiences. These brands are using social media to share updates, address queries, respond to feedback, provide personalized experiences, experiment with video-centric content, and foster trust and loyalty among their customers. Hospitality brands should have a robust social media strategy that reflects the changing consumer preferences and expectations. They should also leverage social media tools and analytics to measure their performance and optimize their campaigns.

Bruhn, Schoenmueller & Schäfer (2012) examined the influence of user-generated and firm-created social media communication on brand equity and brand attitude. Data were collected from a survey of 1,000 consumers who followed at least one luxury fashion brand on social media platforms. Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. User-generated social media communication had a positive influence on brand equity and brand attitude. Firm-created social media communication affected only brand attitude. Luxury fashion brands should encourage user-generated content on social media platforms to enhance their brand equity and attitude. They should also monitor and manage their firm-created content to ensure its consistency and quality.

Liang, Wang & Zhang (2021) explored the impact of customer experience values (return on investment and service excellence) on brand satisfaction, commitment, love, and citizenship behaviors in luxury hotels. Data were collected from a survey of 400 customers who stayed at luxury hotels in China. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was used to test the research model. Customer experience values contributed to the development of brand satisfaction, which in turn positively influenced brand commitment and love. Brand commitment and love had a direct positive impact on customer citizenship behaviors. Luxury hotel managers should focus on delivering superior customer experience values that enhance brand satisfaction, commitment, love, and citizenship behaviors. They should also recognize and reward customers who exhibit positive citizenship behaviors.

Jamil, Dunnan, Gul, Shehzad, Gillani & Awan (2022) explored how social media marketing activities (SMMA) affect consumer intentions (continuance, participate, and purchase) in the context of Pakistan. The study also examined the mediating roles of social identification and satisfaction. The methodology involved a self-administered questionnaire that was distributed to Facebook and Instagram users through an online community. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). The findings showed that SMMA had a significant impact on the intentions of users, and that social identification and satisfaction mediated the relationships between SMMA and user



intentions. The study provided recommendations for marketers on how to use SMMAs to attract and retain customers.

Kim, Lim & Brymer (2015) investigated the effectiveness of managing social media on hotel performance. The study focused on the role of social media in enhancing customer loyalty and online reputation. The methodology involved a content analysis of Facebook pages of 63 hotels in the U.S., and a structural model that linked social media management, customer loyalty, online reputation, and hotel performance. The findings indicated that social media management positively influenced customer loyalty and online reputation, which in turn positively influenced hotel performance. The study provided recommendations for hotel managers on how to use social media to improve customer relationships and competitive advantage.

Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi & Algharabat (2017) reviewed and analyzed the existing literature on social media in marketing. The study aimed to identify the main themes, methods, and outcomes of the previous studies, as well as the gaps and challenges for future research. The methodology involved a systematic literature review of 150 articles published between 2001 and 2015 in leading journals and conferences. The findings revealed that social media in marketing can be categorized into four main themes: social media as a marketing tool, social media as a marketing environment, social media as a marketing strategy, and social media as a marketing outcome. The study also identified various methods, theories, and models used in the previous studies, as well as their implications and limitations. The study provided recommendations for future research directions and agendas.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

### **4.0 FINDINGS**

Our study presented both a contextual and methodological gap. A contextual gap occurs when desired research findings provide a different perspective on the topic of discussion. For instance, Liang, Wang & Zhang (2021) explored the impact of customer experience values (return on investment and service excellence) on brand satisfaction, commitment, love, and citizenship behaviors in luxury hotels. Data were collected from a survey of 400 customers who stayed at luxury hotels in China. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was used to test the research model. Customer experience values contributed to the development of brand satisfaction, which in turn positively influenced brand commitment and love. Brand commitment and love had a direct positive impact on customer citizenship behaviors. Luxury hotel managers should focus on delivering superior customer experience values that enhance brand satisfaction, commitment, love, and citizenship behaviors. They should also recognize and reward customers who exhibit positive citizenship behaviors. On the other hand, our current study focused on exploring the role of social media marketing in shaping customer perceptions of modern hospitality brands.

Secondly, a methodological gap also presents itself, for example, in their study on the impact of customer experience values (return on investment and service excellence) on brand satisfaction, commitment, love, and citizenship behaviors in luxury hotels; Liang, Wang & Zhang (2021) collected from a survey of 400 customers who stayed at luxury hotels in China. Partial least squares structural equation modeling was used to test the research model. Whereas, our study adopted a desktop research method.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusion

Through an exploration of various empirical studies conducted within the past five years, it is evident that social media marketing has become a powerful tool for modern hospitality brands to connect with their audience, convey their brand identity, and ultimately impact customer perceptions. The findings from these studies reveal several key insights. Firstly, it is clear that effective and engaging social media marketing campaigns positively influence customer perceptions, leading to increased brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and a greater likelihood of booking or patronage. Secondly, the influence of user-generated content and online reviews cannot be understated. Customer-generated content can significantly affect how potential customers perceive a hospitality brand, emphasizing the importance of active online reputation management. Additionally, the collaborative efforts of social media influencers and the emotional appeals made by brands on social media platforms play a significant role in shaping customer perceptions.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching for hospitality brands seeking to thrive in the digital era. To harness the full potential of social media marketing, it is crucial for these brands to invest in high-quality, visually appealing content, engage with customers authentically, and actively manage their online reputation. Furthermore, collaborations with relevant social media influencers and the incorporation of emotional appeals into marketing strategies can further enhance brand perceptions and customer engagement.

In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, the study underscores the importance of adaptability and innovation within the realm of social media marketing for modern hospitality brands. By staying attuned to customer preferences and continuously refining their strategies, these brands can not only shape but also elevate customer perceptions, thereby gaining a competitive edge and fostering long-term success in the hospitality industry. As technology and consumer behavior continue to evolve, future research in this area will be essential to further understand the intricate dynamics of social media marketing's influence on customer perceptions and its implications for the modern hospitality sector.

### 5.2 Recommendations

**Develop a cohesive social media branding strategy:** To positively influence customer perceptions, modern hospitality brands should create a well-defined and cohesive social media branding strategy. This strategy should reflect the brand's unique identity, values, and positioning consistently across all social media platforms. Ensure that visual elements, messaging, and the tone of communication align with the brand's personality. Consistency in branding fosters brand recognition and strengthens customer perceptions of authenticity and reliability.

**Engage actively and responsively with customers:** Hospitality brands must actively engage with their customers on social media. Respond to customer queries, comments, and feedback promptly and professionally. Engaging with customers in a positive and personalized manner can enhance their perceptions of the brand's commitment to customer satisfaction. Additionally, showcasing user-generated content, such as guest reviews and experiences, can build trust and authenticity.

**Leverage user-generated content and social proof:** Encourage customers to share their experiences and reviews on social media. User-generated content serves as powerful social proof and can significantly influence the perceptions of potential customers. Modern hospitality brands should create campaigns that incentivize guests to share their positive experiences, whether through hashtags, contests, or exclusive offers. Sharing authentic user-generated content can enhance perceptions of the brand's credibility and quality.

**Invest in visual and interactive content:** Visual content, such as high-quality images and videos, is essential in social media marketing for modern hospitality brands. Invest in visually appealing content that showcases the facilities, amenities, and experiences offered. Interactive content, such as virtual tours or live streams, can also engage and immerse potential customers, positively impacting their perceptions. Utilize storytelling techniques to narrate the brand's unique journey and values through captivating visuals.

**Collaborate with social media influencers:** Collaborating with relevant social media influencers or micro-influencers can be an effective way to reach a broader audience and shape customer perceptions. Identify influencers whose followers align with the brand's target demographic and values. Partner with them to create authentic and engaging content that resonates with their followers. Ensure that influencer partnerships are aligned with the brand's identity and message to maintain consistency.

**Monitor and analyze social media metrics:** Continuously monitor social media metrics to gauge the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Analyze key performance indicators (KPIs) such as engagement rates, reach, and sentiment analysis. Use these insights to refine the social media strategy, focusing on content types and posting schedules that resonate most with the target audience. Regular data-driven adjustments will ensure that social media marketing efforts continue to positively influence customer perceptions.

**Adapt to emerging trends and platforms:** Stay updated with emerging social media trends and platforms. Social media landscape evolves rapidly, and modern hospitality brands should adapt to new channels and technologies to reach their audience effectively. Experiment with emerging platforms, such as TikTok or Clubhouse, if they align with the brand's goals and target demographic. Being at the forefront of social media trends can enhance the brand's image as innovative and in touch with its audience.

Incorporating these recommendations into their social media marketing strategies, modern hospitality brands can actively shape customer perceptions, strengthen brand loyalty, and ultimately drive business growth in the dynamic digital landscape.

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