Chapter 19
E-Marketing and the Hotel Industry:
Calculating Web Presence Index (WPI) for the Hospitality Sector

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ABSTRACT
In today’s world, as online consumers become more price sensitive, less brand loyal and more sophisticated, e-Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and e-marketing becomes a strategic necessity for attracting and increasing consumer’s patronage. This manuscript traces the evolution of e-marketing and demonstrates the relationship between the Web Presence Index (WPI) of the hospitality sector across a set of hotels. Here WPI of a particular hotel brand is a function of the total web presence across the Website, FaceBook Page, YouTube, Twitter and MakeMyTrip.com. Subsequently, a positive relationship is visible between the Web Presence Index (WPI) for each hotel and further, it’s Alexa traffic volume indicates the total online user traffic. This manuscript demonstrates the web presence of hotels through WPI, Alexa, traffic volume, and their weighted calculated score on the basis of the above parameters. The Web Presence Index is indicative of the usability, credibility and persuasiveness of a consumer in the context of hotel websites. It further depicts how hotels can build better relations with customers by recognizing their needs, preferences, complaints and so on.

INTRODUCTION
Websites play a central role in contributing to the brand identity of a hotel and further improving its Customer Relationship Management goals. In this research paper, five hotels are compared-Taj Group of Hotels, ITC Hotels Ltd, Oberoi Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt, The Leela Palaces Hotels and Resorts to check their online presence on web using the Web Presence Index (WPI) and Alexa tool.

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Web presence of each of the hotels across the web will help us to confirm whether the information that hotels provide to their consumers through their official websites is correct or not, and the value associated by the consumers for the online presence. Also, the length of the visit and number of page views can be determined. We will predetermine certain features (reservation facility, room categories, gallery, offers, contact us, careers etc.) to be looked for and evaluated in each of the hotels, in order to calculate their respective weights for web presence through a website. Domain names play vital roles in calculating the web presence as the shorter, easy and relevant the domain name is, it would be more convenient for consumers to be attracted towards the website as it is easy to memorize and recognize the hotels’ website. Web presence through Facebook pages will provide us information on how effectively the hotel is targeting its audience and attracting them to like their pages as well as their activities. This can be determined by an individual hotel’s number of likes in ratio with the sum of total likes for all.

Web presence through Twitter will give us insight into the number of customers that follow the hotel, it’s service, objective and ideology. This can be determined by the number of followers for each hotel on Twitter. The fourth parameter, presence on YouTube can be evaluated by the number of views on the official videos shared by the hotel on YouTube. The last parameter, presence on Make-mytrip.com will provide us information on how active a hotel group is on sites providing business to them. This can be determined by their presence on such sites (Pickton, & Broderick, 2001).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

E-Marketing

E-Marketing has become a link between modern communication technologies. E-Marketing, also known as electronic marketing applies marketing technologies and principles via the internet. It helps in the process of marketing a brand over the internet and increasing its reach ability. E-marketing involves all the activities an enterprise presents through the World Wide Web in order to attract new customers and businesses and retain them. E-marketing makes use of these same technologies specifically as a logical extension to fulfill the traditional market practices of creating, communicating and delivering value to customers. Closely aligned with this, e-commerce refers specifically to the facilitation of the transactions created by the businesses’ marketing activities. In the same manner, internet marketing and e-marketing are often used synonymously and taken to mean the same thing (Strauss & Frost, 2005; Coupey, 2001; Chaffey, 2003; O’Connor et al., 2004). The internet is the venue where e-commerce takes place; it provides information via the World Wide Web, e-mail, allows for real-time communications and enables the sharing of databases. However, e-marketing is about much more than just the internet. It involves other technologies that enable Customer Relationship Management, Enterprise Resource Planning, Supply Chain Management, Text Messaging, Bar Code scanners and Digital TV (Fjermestad & Romano, 2003). Electronic customer relationship management: revisiting the general principles of usability and resistance – an integrative implementation framework. Business Process Management Journal, 9: 572 – 591.”

E-Marketing follows a strategy to spread commercial messages to groups of people in order to increase awareness regarding the service or product. With the help of E-marketing, these days hotels are able to take feedback, complaints, queries and appreciation from their customers. Through their official website, hotels can make their consumers aware about new offers, discounts, and festive offers. A strong online presence nowadays is not merely a recommendation but has become a bare necessity. As tourists from all over the world use the web and track details of fascinating and convenient hotel destinations, it is necessary for the hotel industry
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