

## Social Media Marketing: Utilizing Social Media to Advance Brand Awareness and Increase Online Sales

**Social media** is increasingly important as a **marketing** tool, but small businesses may be **underutilizing it**. To date, a small number of studies have investigated the impact of **social mediamarketing** on small businesses in the hotel industry. *(can be something to do research on for original work)* Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of social media on the bed and breakfast (B&B) industry segment, as measured by the influence of social media outreach on brand awareness and online sales. The results of this **study indicated strong correlations between the social media outreach efforts, and both brand awareness and online sales.**

Keywords: **Social media, marketing**, bed and breakfast inns (B&B), hospitality, hotels, motels

Full Text:

### INTRODUCTION

This research explored the impact of social media on the bed and breakfast industry. Social media are **internet** tools that facilitate interaction by enabling the continuous generation, exchange, and modification of content (Noone, Mcguire, & Rohlfs, 2011). In the business realm, social media platforms (including **Facebook**, Twitter, TripAdvisor, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, and others) **allow consumers to interact with businesses' online presences in real time, accessing information about products and services and providing direct feedback.** *(the direct feedback allows the customers to get the instant gratification they are used to because of cellphones)*

This gives businesses the advantage of being able to directly address customers' problems, which can lead to **fewer customers lost due to satisfaction issues** (Kim, Lim, & Brymer, 2015).

Additionally, social media helps businesses build their brands by enabling the distribution of recognizable content and facilitating word-of-mouth recommendations (Gamboa & Goncalves, 2014; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Fuller, 2013).

To maximize the effectiveness of social media, companies must not only respond to customer feedback, but also proactively use **social media to expand their customer base** and encourage repeat purchases through **social media marketing** (Leung, Law, van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Social media platforms enable businesses to very quickly share marketing content with large audiences. Thus, social media is a cost saving strategy when compared with traditional media

marketing strategies (Dobele, Toleman, & Beverland, 2005). Businesses in all sectors are increasingly adopting **social media** as part of their **marketing** and customer relations strategies (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012), but the hotel and tourism industry has used these technologies successfully (Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee, 2010).

This study investigates the impact of social media on the bed and breakfast (B&B) industry segment, as measured by the influence of social media outreach on brand awareness and online sales.

## BACKGROUND OF THIS STUDY

Bed and breakfast inns (B&Bs) are **small businesses that provide customers with overnight accommodations and serve breakfast**. Because 90% of this segment of the hotel industry is characterized by businesses with **fewer than 10 employees** (*human resources management*) (Fajardo, 2014), B&Bs often do not have sufficient budgets for large-scale traditional **marketing** campaigns. Therefore, **social media** has become a particularly important aspect of B&B marketing and **customer relations because of the low cost associated with social media tools** (*Ms. Borda talked about this in our interview*) (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010).

Effective use of social media could **give B&Bs establishments a competitive advantage**, maximizing the amount of business they are able to generate while minimizing their marketing expenditures. To date, research is limited in the B&B segment specifically, but general research in the hotel industry has strongly suggested that the benefits of social media for accommodation establishments **include increased visibility and higher sales** (*these benefits are basically uniform throughout marketing, as seen in the interview with Regina Borda*) (e.g., Inversini & Masiero, 2014). **European Travel Commission (2010)** has even gone so far as to explicitly suggest that to remain competitive, hotels should emphasize online interaction with clients, which is facilitated by social media. Establishments in the B&B sector have already begun to take advantage of the latest trends or tools of social media (First Research, 2014); however, the challenge for B&B managers is to **measure the quantitative impact of these media on business outcomes** (*interview with Regina Borda and Megan Stein showed techniques to help with analyzing this data, said it was easier than analyzing traditional media sources*) (Walsh, 2010). Data generated through social media, **such as spending patterns and satisfaction ratings, are useful in determining return on investment and other performance indicators** (Kasavana,

2008). Nevertheless, it is difficult to tie these results directly to the use of social media (Brooks & Simkin, 2011).

Additionally, few researchers (e.g. Inversini & Masiero, 2014; Scarinci & Richins, 2008) have investigated the differences between various segments of the hotel industry, so the practices that work well for large hotels may not be as effective in the B&B segment. Therefore, there are two problems, which the current research addressed. First, there is a lack of quantitative data related to the impact of social media on B&B establishments, potentially making it difficult for proprietors to justify investment in social media strategies. This leads to an underutilization of social media and, potentially, a loss of revenue. The second problem is a significant gap in the research literature concerning social media and B&B establishments. *(however, trends can be made by using a cumulative sum of the data that is present for the food industry)*

Only a few academic studies have investigated B&Bs specifically (e.g. Chen, Lin, & Kuo, 2013; Crawford, Deale, & Merritt, 2013). Given these problems, it was necessary to investigate the extent to which social media marketing and customer relations strategies benefit B&B organizations. If B&Bs are to remain competitive, it was also necessary to discover how these benefits can be more reliably tracked. The goal of this study was to address those problems using quantitative research with a survey design.

### **Bed and Breakfast and Hotel Internet Marketing**

The primary forms of marketing and advertising for bed and breakfasts are word of mouth and Internet presence (Crawford, Deale, & Merritt, 2013). Establishments generally allocate a small proportion of their operating budget to brochures, rate cards, and other forms of print advertising, with a larger proportion allocated to Internet marketing; nearly all B&B establishments had had their own websites for over a decade (Lituchy & Rail, 2000). Despite the common use of the Internet for marketing, researchers have suggested that B&B owners often lack the knowledge and resources to make effective use of online marketing options *(can have research or original work geared towards solving such a problem)* (Huang, 2008). Bed and breakfast accommodations usually cost substantially more than standard motel/hotel accommodations; the average room rate for one night at a B&B is approximately \$160 (First Research, 2014).

For bed and breakfasts, revenue is highly seasonal, with most establishments experiencing high and low seasons based upon the weather, vacation travel, and holidays (Huang, 2008). During the high season, some establishments might achieve 90% occupancy levels. Occupancy rates can dip as low as 20% during the low season. In order to achieve a higher occupancy rate during the off-season, many establishments reduce room rates and offer special promotions (First Research, 2014). *(through research and trends about the patterns, a formulation to predict the revenue can be made)*

The hotel industry in general is increasingly recognizing the importance of online marketing activities, particularly those that provide a measure of interactivity (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). European Travel Commission (2010) explicitly suggested that hotels should take steps to incorporate online interaction with clients into their operating strategies. However, small businesses in the hotel industry, including B&Bs, have a history of lagging behind larger competitors in the use of the Internet. As early as 2000, before the rise of social media, Lituchy and Rail (2000) reported that a sample of 399 B&Bs and small inns underutilized their websites, failing to provide video and audio content or content in other languages. *(create technology/ site to help smaller companies with website development)*

Crawford, Deale, and Merritt (2013) conducted a study to assess the state of marketing in the B&B industry. Using an electronic survey instrument, they asked B&B owner-operators about their use of various marketing channels. They identified web-based marketing, including social media and websites, among the most frequently used strategies. Participants of the study also indicated a high degree of effectiveness for web-based marketing. However, web-based marketing was still surpassed by word of mouth marketing in terms of both frequency of use and effectiveness, as perceived by the study's respondents (Crawford, Deale, & Merritt, 2013). Research conducted by Chen, Lin, and Kuo (2013) corroborated this finding. The researchers used a questionnaire to analyze the effectiveness of various marketing strategies among B&B establishments in Taiwan, and word of mouth marketing again came out on top in terms of frequency and effectiveness (Chen, Lin, & Kuo, 2013). *(word of mouth is important to the hotel business, and by conglomerating the effects to an online platform, rating hotels, it is easier)*

One limitation of the Crawford, Deale, and Merritt (2013) and Chen, Lin, and Kuo, (2013) studies is that both research teams used self-report questionnaires to assess marketing effectiveness from the point of view of establishment owners and employees. It is clear from

these findings that small hotel proprietors perceive word of mouth marketing to be the most effective form, but they cannot necessarily be taken as objective indications of the actual effectiveness of various marketing strategies. Indeed, other research approaches have identified an important performance advantage to be gained through online marketing.

For example, Kim, Lim, and Brymer, (2015) conducted a study to investigate the effect of proactive management of online reviews on hotel performance. They collected data on the performance of each hotel in a large hotel chain, their online reviews, and the rate of response to negative reviews for each establishment. The results of their analysis showed that higher overall ratings and higher response rates to negative reviews were directly correlated to hotel performance. They also concluded that proactive management of online presence is a crucial aspect of hotel marketing, and that it can have an observable impact on business outcomes.

Kim, Lim, and Brymer, (2015) focused on a large hotel chain, but researchers have also empirically established the importance of online visibility for small businesses in the hotel industry. For example, Smithson, Devece, and Lapiedra (2011) investigated the relationships among use of the Internet as a distribution channel, online visibility, and organizational performance at 105 hotels in Spain with under 250 employees. They found no strong correlation between having a website and improved organizational performance. However, Internet visibility was positively correlated with organizational performance, and the difference between web presence and web visibility was a strong indicator of competitive advantage. Businesses that had a web presence that was highly visible during tourists' online searches, appearing among the top web results, performed better than those that had a web presence but were not highly visible.

*(better website = highly website = pops first for tourists)* The researchers concluded that small hotel managers need to be proactive in developing Internet visibility in order to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by web tools (Smithson, Devece, & Lapiedra, 2011). Similarly, Primorac, Smoljic, and Bogomolec (2012) argued that proactive, rather than passive, use of Internet-based marketing strategies is essential for the success of small hotels.

**Social media marketing** is a unique marketing strategy in that it combines both Internet marketing and word of mouth marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Indeed, social accessibility was found in one study to be an important predictor of online word of mouth recommendations

(Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013). As such, it could enable B&B owners to take advantage simultaneously of both of the most effective marketing strategies. The characteristics and uses of **social media marketing** are described in detail below.

### **Social Media Marketing**

**Social media** empower firms to captivate shoppers, generally with minimal effort and more productively than more conventional communication devices allow. **This makes social media suitable organizations of all sizes** (*customize*) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Large companies have increasingly begun to employ social media managers to engage in social media full time (Lanz, 2010). Within the hotel industry, **empirical evidence suggests that positive comments on social media platforms can have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards hotels** (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009).

Travel Industry Wire (2010) reported one anecdotal success story demonstrating how organizations in the hotel industry can make effective use of social media. **Gainey Suites Hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona, represents itself as "the social media hotel."** According to the report, the hotel emphasizes the **use of Twitter, You Tube, and Flickr in its overall marketing strategy, and attributes its success to these platforms** (Travel Industry Wire, 2010). The establishment is **top-ranked on the travel review site TripAdvisor**, and it promotes its special offers through Facebook (Travel Industry Wire, 2010). This success story **demonstrates how small hotels can generate business and raise awareness using online marketing and social media.**

Not all commentators have agreed that the impact of social media on the travel sector is unequivocally positive. Scott and Orlikowski (2012), for example, researched the impact of social media on accountability in the travel industry. Their results indicated that TripAdvisor and other travel-oriented social media tools had a tendency to remove accountability from hotels and other organizations. **The argument was that, since consumers have access to reviews and detailed information about establishments, they should have an understanding of what to expect and therefore should not be dissatisfied.** The authors concluded that social media could threaten the integrity of organizations. (*if the needs and wants are not met, then the customer is dissatisfied*)

Nevertheless, information **technology** has become increasingly important for the marketing and operations of B&Bs. At the time of this writing, nearly all establishments have websites with

many of these also advertising on B&B aggregation sites or online travel agents (First Research, 2014). The B&B industry has begun to engage in efforts to offer innovative and customized applications to customers in order to interact proactively and to provide responsive customer services (*1st person to tweet this wins etc*) (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010). Nevertheless, little research exists related to the use of social media specifically among B&B establishments. The bulk of the research that exists in this area focuses on the hotel industry generally, with samples that include B&Bs as well as larger hotels and motels. Indeed, researchers have noted a paucity of research related to the use of social media as a marketing tool among hotels in general (Phelan, Chen, & Haney, 2013). In this section, the researchers review existing literature related to both large and small accommodation enterprises and suggests potential implications for B&Bs.

Inversini and Masiero (2014) recently conducted a study exploring the importance for online sales of social media and online travel agents among a diverse sample of hotels in Switzerland, including both large and small hotels, B&B establishments. They found that social media engagement, particularly highly visible engagement, predicted online sales. Perhaps their most significant finding, however, was that social media adoption was much higher among businesses using online management tools and among those employing people with Internet-specific skills. (*hire more tech savvy people*) Because both of these factors represent increased marketing costs, the Inversini and Masiero finding suggests that smaller establishments with tighter budgetary constraints may be at a disadvantage in terms of effective use of social media. (*unable to allocate significant portion of funds for social media*) Harrigan, Ramsey, and Ibbotson (2012) conducted that small businesses, unlike their larger counterparts, do not frequently purchase marketing software packages. They argued that the price of such packages may be prohibitive, and small business owners may not be convinced that the investment in online social media management tools is worth the cost. This underscores the need for this study, which seeks to establish the return on investment for B&Bs of such online marketing strategies. Among larger organizations, adoption of social media marketing has not kept up with increases in consumer use of these tools (*more efforts needed*) (Noone, Mcguire, & Rohlf, 2011).

One reason for this could be the complexity of effective **social media** engagement. **Marketing** professionals in the hotel industry need to **segment social media engagement in order to target distinct customer profiles**. This can be challenging because there is a danger that **differentiated social media engagement could send conflicting messages to customers, thereby damaging business performance, if the social media strategy is not coordinated effectively** (*telling one customer one thing, and another customer another thing can deteriorate relationships*) (Noone, Mcguire, & Rohlfs, 2011). Such complications could deter small B&B enterprises from engaging in proactive social media campaigns.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) have argued that it is impossible for businesses to neglect to engage in **social media marketing**. **Even if businesses choose not to establish social media profiles or engage with consumers via social media, consumers will still create social media content related to their experiences with the business. Business owners have no control over the type of content consumers create on social media**. If such content is negative, the result may be damaging to a business' reputation and a decrease in sales. However, businesses that respond to consumers' social media comments may be able to limit the amount of damage caused by negative publicity. Therefore, it is essential for all businesses to be proactive in engaging in social media communities.

### Social Media and Brand Awareness

Since at least the early 1980s, researchers have studied brand awareness and its impacts on consumer behavior and business outcomes (Hoyer & Brown, 1990). They defined **brand awareness** as "a rudimentary level of brand involving, at the least, recognition of the brand name" (p. 141). The researchers noted that there is a continuum of brand awareness ranging from simple name recognition to thorough, detailed knowledge of a brand, its associated products, and other information. **They established evidence that, when consumers are aware of a brand, they are more likely to select that brand when they make purchasing decisions social media can be used to increase brand awareness and engagement, indicating that brand awareness has significance for business outcomes.**

More recent evidence establishes that this is still the case. In 2000, Macdonald and Sharp replicated the Hoyer and Brown (1990) study using nearly identical methods. Their results supported those of the original study, indicating that brand awareness was a significant factor in consumers' choice of products, even when the awareness was attached to lower-quality products. Recently, Huang and Sarigollu (2012) established a connection between brand awareness and the overall value of the brand.

Broadly, evidence suggests that **social media can be used to increase brand awareness and engagement.** *(why Pizza Hut uses more social media technology)* For example, in a case study of Nestle UK, Mount and Garcia Martinez (2014) reported that the company was able to substantially improve brand awareness among 18-24 year olds with a social media campaign for its Kit Kat brand. Similarly, brand awareness was positively associated with engagement with a Facebook fan page among customers of car manufacturer MINI (Hutter, et al. 2013).

When comparing customers of the clothing retailer Zara, Gamboa, and Gon9alves (2014) found that **those who were fans of the company's Facebook page were more loyal, more satisfied, and more trusting of the brand than those who were not.** Each of the above studies focused on a single, large company, and none of the businesses investigated were in the hospitality industry. However, these preliminary results suggest that social media may present opportunities for businesses to build brand awareness in general, and this statement has received attention among business commentators (Lanz, Fischhof, & Lee, 2010).

Within the [hospitality industry](#), researchers have just begun to direct their attention to the potential of social media. Using a sample of 104 companies in the Malaysian hospitality industry, Yan Xin, Ramayah, Soto-Acosta, Popa, and Ai Ping (2014) found that businesses have begun to realize the potential of social media to build brand awareness, but that overall the tools are underutilized. **In a study examining the impact of social media on tourism website traffic, Milano, Baggio, and Piattelli (2011) found that Facebook and Twitter contributed a statistically significant volume of traffic to tourism websites, including those of accommodation providers.** Although the researchers did not specifically investigate ownership of the social media pages, they hypothesized that many of those that contributed web traffic to tourism websites were not owned by the businesses running the websites. This implies that **social media posts made**

spontaneously by consumers may be contributing to brand awareness by directing social media users to tourism websites (Milano, Baggio, & Piattelli, 2011).

Brand awareness may increase performance in the hotel industry even when the awareness is associated with negative publicity. *(why would it increase the level or performance?)* Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) found that customers are more likely to choose hotels if they have read reviews of the hotels, irrespective of whether the reviews are positive or negative. Although this study did not specifically address social media, reviews are an inherent part of the social media experience for brands on the most popular platforms, including Facebook. *(can look into for my original work)*

### Social Media and Online Sales

Compared with the paucity of research on social media's effect on brand awareness, the relationship between online sales and social media is a well-studied area. It was found that social media has become a key source of researching for travelers; 83% utilize social media for research purposes. Of these, 77% travelers referred to the reviews by other travelers to finalize their travel destination (Wilker, 2007). This finding shows that social media has emerged as a powerful tool influencing purchasing decisions in travel-related industries.

As with other areas related to the research topic, there is little or no existing research focusing specifically on B&B establishments. However, the hotel industry broadly has been investigated in this connection. Inversini and Masiero (2014) revealed a strong relationship between online visibility, including social media presence, and online sales among a sample of hotels. They also found that social media was perceived as more important among hoteliers running larger establishments (as measured by hotel room capacity), suggesting that small-capacity establishments like B&Bs may underestimate the importance of social media.

Although it seems clear that social media can help generate online sales, the mechanisms by which this interaction takes place are poorly understood. One research team suggested that the balance between online and offline sales is not affected by factors related to the establishment, being influenced instead by the type of travel (Crnojevac, Gugic, & Karlovcan, 2010). In their study, Poyry, Parvinean, and Malmivaara (2013) investigated the effects of several factors related to consumers' Facebook usage on business performance among 1,162 visitors to the Facebook page of a travel agency. Their results showed that the number of people who "like" a

company's Facebook page does not necessarily have an effect on the company's sales. However, they found that users, who simply browsed without becoming members of the Facebook page, were more likely to have purchase intentions and to refer the company to others. *(tools to track the number of visitors of a page, esp. on twitter)*

This reveals a two-dimensional mechanism of social media's impact on online sales. First, it is necessary for businesses to generate online communities, thereby extending the reach of their social media sites. Second, it is essential to ensure that those who browse the page are easily able to make recommendations and purchases, even if they are not themselves members of the established online communities (Poyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013).

Social media's impact on sales is not always positive. Kasavana, Nusair, and Teodosic (2010) concluded that social media expose organizations in the hospitality industry to significant risk related to negative reviews, unfair criticism, and unfounded speculation *(involve yourself and show customers the true brand content, so they don't believe what emerges)* (Wagstaff, 2010). However, this does not necessarily represent an argument against social media involvement. According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), proactive engagement in social media can help businesses avoid negative consequences from unfounded negativity on the part of consumers.

Social media interactions could have an effect on sales via traditional media. This possibility was uncovered by Stephen and Galak (2012) in their study of the effect of traditional earned media (e.g., press publicity) and social earned media (e.g., consumer blog and social media posts) on sales activity. According to their results, high levels of social earned media played a role in increasing traditional earned media. In other words, if a business is mentioned frequently by consumers on social media, that company is more likely to earn publicity in traditional press outlets than a company that lacks such significant social media activity (Stephen & Galak, 2012). In addition to partly explaining the importance of social media on sales, this study highlights the complexity of social media as it pertains to business results (Mowat, 2010). By clarifying the role of social media among B&Bs, the proposed study should make it easier for B&B proprietors to engage in effective social media practices specific to the B&B segment.

## HYPOTHESES

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of the social media outreach efforts on the brand awareness, and online sales among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the

proprietors of those establishments Based on the objective, the following null and alternative hypotheses were developed and tested:

H10: There is no significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and brand awareness among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the proprietors of those establishments. *(brand awareness)*

H1: There is significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and brand awareness among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the proprietors of those establishments. *(brand awareness)*

H20: There is no significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and online sales among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the proprietors of those establishments. *(online sales)*

H2: There is significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and online sales among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the proprietors of those establishments. *(online sales)*

## METHODOLOGY

### Survey Instrument

The researchers designed a survey to gather data (Appendix A). The survey was composed of multiple-choice items designed to elicit information regarding demographics (location [rural, urban], number of rooms, seasonal; survey items 1-3), proprietors' perception of social media outreach efforts by proprietor and/or employees (survey items 4-8); proprietors' perception of brand awareness of their bed and breakfast establishments (survey items 9-12); and online sales (survey items 13-14). The items were modeled on similar items and findings from related literature and adapted to suit the bed and breakfast setting.

A review panel of five individuals (including university faculty, colleagues, and consultants) was recruited to determine the survey's validity and to examine the survey's construction. After being briefed on the study's background and design, the panel members were asked to review the survey's introduction and questions to ensure that each item's purpose matched its content, advise of any need for rewording or deletion, and identify any errors in grammar and syntax. Panel members were also asked to recommend additions to the survey that might help address the

research questions. After major revisions to the survey, the panel review process was repeated, after which only minor revisions were necessary.

To determine internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was used. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency. It is a popular measurement used to establish reliability. Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient that ranges from 0 to 1. An alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher is considered an indication of good reliability (Bruin, 2006). After modifications for face validity (per the panel review), the survey for this study fit this criterion of reliability.

SurveyMonkey was used to distribute the survey. The population of interest in this study was B&B proprietors with establishments located in the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of social media on the B&B industry, as measured by the influence of social media outreach on brand awareness and online sales. The researchers also sought to establish whether the current social media strategies used by B&B establishments are effective, in order to provide insight into how this unique business sector can optimize and track its use of social media.

#### Sample and Data Collection

The target sample size for this study was 120. The actual sample size was 144. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample for the study; SurveyMonkey's participant solicitation service was employed.

G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) was used to calculate the sample size.

G\*Power is "a tool to compute statistical power analyses for many different t tests, F tests, [chi square] tests, z tests and some exact tests" (Buchner, 2013, para. 1). With alpha = .05, power = 0.80, effect size = .15 (medium), and number of predictors = 4, the necessary sample size was calculated to be 80. According to Salkind (1997), researchers should increase their sample when sending out surveys by a factor of 50% to allow for non-respondents.

#### Measurement of Variables

Total scores for branding awareness were calculated as the sum of items 9 (How much do you feel you get from the Social Media in terms of SEO [Search Engine Optimization?]) and 11 (How much do you feel you get in terms of business and branding from Social Media?). Both items were scored on a 3-point scale ranging from 0 (nothing) to 3 (a lot). Therefore, the range of

possible scores for branding awareness was 0-6. The actual range for the research sample was 0-6, with a mean score of 3.3, standard deviation (SD) = 1.2). By dividing the overall mean by two items, the mean response for each item is calculated to be 1.7, between 1 (not much) and 2 (some).

Percentage of sales from social media was measured by Item 13 (What percentage of your sales comes from social media [Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, You Tube, TripAdvisor, Yelp, Pinterest, Google+]?). Respondents could choose from six options, which were coded as follows: 0% = 0, 1-10% = 1, 11-20% = 2, 21-30% = 3, 31-40% = 4, and more than 40% = 5. Therefore, the possible score range was 0-5. The actual range was 0-3, and the mean for this research sample was 1.3 (SD = .6), which would be between 1-10% and 11-21% of sales from social media.

The independent variable in this study was social media outreach efforts. A total score for outreach efforts was calculated as the sum of items 5 (Do you make any management decision based on social media feedback?; coded no = 0 and yes = 1), 6 (How many years have you been using social media?; coded 1-2 = 1, 3-5 = 2, 6-10 = 3, more than 10 = 4), 8 (How many hours a week on average do you spend using social media to market your business?; coded 0 = 0, 1-2 = 1, 3-5 = 2, 6-10 = 3, more than 10 = 4), and 7 (total number of media venues used out of nine choices; coded no = 0, yes = 1, and summed to get total number of venues used). The possible scores could range from 2 to 16. The sample outreach efforts score actually ranged from 3 to 16, with a mean score of 9.1 SD = 3.3).

#### Data Analysis

After data cleaning, data were loaded into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 (IBM Corp., 2013) for analysis. The researcher used hierarchical regression in order to determine the relationship of the dependent variables (DVs) with the independent variable (IV), while controlling for the covariates.

### RESULTS OF STUDY

#### Descriptive Statistics

This section contains a description of the data, including the characteristics of the sample and frequencies related to the research variables. The researchers also presents the frequency of use

of various social media platforms. Table 1 summarizes the covariate descriptive statistics for this sample.

The majority (n = 65, 57%) of respondents ran B&Bs located in rural areas. Most (n = 76, 67%) of the B&B establishments had between 3 and 10 bedrooms. The least frequently reported number of rooms was 1-2 (n = 17 establishments, 14.9%). A large majority (n = 91, 80%) of respondents reported that their B&Bs were open year round; the remainder were open only seasonally. Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for these variables.

The results for question 12 (Of the social media venues available, which ONE do you feel you get the most from social media in terms of business branding?) and 14 (Of these social media platforms, which one generates the most revenue in your B&B?). The highest proportion (n = 29, 25.4%) chose "Other" while the lowest proportion chose Pinterest (n = 2, 1.8%). *(no real use of social media)* For both questions, YouTube and Google+ took second and third places, respectively, and TripAdvisor and Yelp were in the middle. Table 3 summarizes the results for Items 12 and 14. Overall, TripAdvisor was perceived as more effective for branding than for revenue. Twitter was perceived as the most effective for branding about twice as often as for revenue. Conversely, Yelp was perceived as more effective for revenue generation than for branding.

### The Regression Analysis

#### a. The assumption of linearity and normal distribution

Multiple regression analysis assumes that the relationships between the dependent variables and the independent variable are linear and that residuals are normally distributed. Table 4 summarizes the results of the test for linearity. Correlations between the dependent variables (brand awareness and percent of sales) and the independent variable (social media outreach efforts) were calculated as presented in Table 4. The dependent variable percent of sales correlated with the independent variable ( $R = .514, p < .001$ ). The dependent variable brand awareness also correlated with the independent variable ( $R = .563, p < .001$ ). These significant correlations supported the assumption the relationships between the DVs and the IV are linear.

#### b. The potential of multicollinearity

Multiple regression analysis assumes the potential of multicollinearity. To test for multicollinearity, the researchers examined the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance for

the independent variable (social media outreach efforts) in regression analyses where the covariates were present. A tolerance close to 0 was taken to indicate multicollinearity. A value of 0.1 served as the cutoff. A VIF value close to 10 was taken to indicate multicollinearity. Table 5 summarizes the multicollinearity results.

For the regression with percentage of sales as the dependent variable, the tolerance for outreach efforts was .991 (greater than the cutoff of 0.1) and the VIF was 1.009 (smaller than 10). These statistics indicate there is no multicollinearity for outreach efforts with the covariates in the regression where percentage of sales was the dependent variable. In the regression where brand awareness was the dependent variable, the tolerance for effort was .980 (greater than the cutoff of 0.1) and the VIF was 1.021 (smaller than 10). These statistics indicate there is no multicollinearity for outreach efforts with the covariates in the regression where brand awareness was the DV. *(multicollinearity is when you use other data to help predict the referred data)*

### Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression was used to determine the relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variable while controlling for the covariates. Separate hierarchical regressions were completed for the two dependent variables (brand awareness and percent of sales). The hierarchical regressions were carried out in two steps. The first step involved a model including the dependent variable and the covariates, but not the independent. The second step involved adding the independent variable to the model and analyzing the extent to which the explanatory power of the model changed, and whether the independent variable (social media outreach score) was significant.

### Tests of Hypotheses

Table 6 summarizes the results of the tests related to this hypothesis. Without the independent variable, the model was not significant ( $F[3, 110] = .76, p = .522$ ). The covariates (location, number of rooms, when open) did not significantly correlate with the dependent variable (brand awareness). After adding the independent variable, the model was significant, ( $F[4, 109] = 27.37, p < .001$ ).

The addition of the independent variable (outreach effort) significantly increased the variance in brand awareness explained by the composite of the variables (change in  $[R.\text{sup}.2] = .48, p < .001$ ). An  $[R.\text{sup}.2]$  of .48 indicates a large effect size, which suggests a strong relationship between outreach effort and brand awareness. The coefficients for the covariates (location, number of rooms, when open) were not significant. The coefficient for the independent variable social media outreach effort ( $[\beta] = .70, p < .001$ ) was significant. Thus, the first-null hypothesis was rejected because it proposed that, there is no statistically significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and brand awareness. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (There is a significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and brand awareness) was accepted. When controlling for the covariates (location, number of room, when open), the independent variable (outreach effort) explains a significant portion of the variance in brand awareness.

Table 7 summarizes the results of the analysis for this hypothesis. Without the independent variable, the model was not significant ( $F 3, 110) = .37, p = .773$ ). The covariates (location, number of rooms, when open) did not significantly relate to the dependent variable (percent of sales). After adding the independent variable, the model was significant ( $F 4, 109) = 9.92, p < .001$ ). The addition of the independent variable (social media outreach effort) significantly increased the variance in percent of sales explained by the composite of the variables (change in  $[R.\text{sup}.2] = .26, p < .001$ ). An  $[R.\text{sup}.2]$  of .26 indicates a large effect size or a strong relationship when outreach effort is added to the model.

The coefficients for the covariate (location, number of rooms, when open) were not significant. The coefficient for the independent variable effort outreach ( $[\beta] = .51, p < .001$ ) was significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected because it proposed that "There is no significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and online sales". Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (There is a statistically significant relationship between social media outreach efforts and online sales" was accepted. When controlling for the covariates (location, number of room, when open), the independent variable (outreach effort) explains a significant portion of the variance in percent of sales.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study made it clear that B&B proprietors in the United States perceive social media as an effective tool for generating brand awareness and increasing sales revenue through online channels. For this quantitative survey study, the research question was: What relationships, if any, exist among social media outreach efforts, brand awareness, and online sales among bed and breakfast establishments, as perceived by the proprietors of those establishments? In general, it is possible to answer the research question by asserting that there are strong positive correlations between, on the one hand, social media outreach efforts and brand awareness, and, on the other, social media outreach efforts and online sales.

In the case of brand awareness, the correlation was particularly strong, with a beta coefficient ([beta]) of .70 ( $p < .001$ ). The [beta] is an indication of the expected increase in the dependent variable when the independent variable increases by one unit (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). In this case, if social media outreach effort increases by one unit, we would expect an increase of .70 in brand awareness. By contrast, the  $r^2$  for online sales was .51 ( $p < .001$ ). This indicates that, when participants engaged more frequently in online marketing, they concomitantly experienced more brand awareness and more online sales from social media than those who did not. However, for participants who used social media marketing, the benefits to brand awareness were about 27% stronger than the benefits to revenue as measured by online sales.

The greater impact of social media marketing on brand awareness is also reflected in the data frequencies. For brand awareness, the possible score range was 0-6, and the actual score range among the sample was also 0-6, with a mean of 3.3. By contrast, the possible score range for online sales was 0-5, but the actual score range was only 0-3, with a mean of 1.3. This shows that none of the participants felt they were receiving the maximum possible benefit to online sales from social media marketing. It can be confidently concluded from this that social media marketing efforts among B&B proprietors are more beneficial to brand awareness than to online sales.

This is an important finding because, to date, little research has been conducted on social media marketing's effect on brand awareness. A few studies have supported the link (Gamboa & Gonqalves, 2014; Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Fuller, 2013), but, to this researchers knowledge,

this is the first study to demonstrate such a link in a small business B&B environment.

Additionally, much prior research has emphasized the importance of social media for revenue, but this study shows that brand awareness may be a more important outcome of **social media marketing** efforts.

Further research will be needed to confirm this finding, it is important that B&B proprietors align their marketing strategies with the tools that can yield the most benefit. **Lack of resources may be preventing B&Bs from changing existing social media strategies, despite their suboptimal nature.**

For example, established Pinterest accounts may be easy to maintain despite being unimportant to revenue and branding. Although proprietors perceive that YouTube would be more effective, they may fail to make use of YouTube due to the resource-intensive nature of producing videos and maintaining or creating a YouTube presence.

**Finally, when asked which social media tool was most useful, the participants most frequently chose "Other," indicating that there are social media tools not examined in this study that should be investigated as to their impact on B&B business outcomes.** Unfortunately, it is not possible to

tell from the data collected for this study what other social media tools B&B proprietors are using. One possibility is the **website AirBnB, which allows users to list short-term rental properties and accept bookings and payment,** with or without official business licenses (Mattson-Teig, 2015). To the researchers' knowledge, there is currently no peer-reviewed research on the use of AirBnB in the B&B segment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

One aim of this study was to provide insight into the **social media marketing** practices that could be useful at B&B establishments, in order to help proprietors to justify resource expenditures on **social media marketing**. It is clear from this research that **social media marketing** generally can lead to brand awareness and online sales if it is used proactively. This study also yielded some insights into ways in which B&B establishments could begin to improve their **social media marketing** strategies.

First, it is recommended that **B&B proprietors devote more time to engaging in social media marketing activities.** In this study, participants who did not engage in **social media marketing** were not able to generate brand awareness and online sales from those sources. Therefore,

passive social media presence does not help B&B establishments generate businesses. There is no "set it and forget it" solution to social media marketing--the more time and resources proprietors devote to these activities, the stronger their results will be.

Second, it is recommended that B&B proprietors who currently engage in social media marketing should reevaluate the social media tools they are using and realign their marketing strategies to be more effective. In particular, engaging in Pinterest, Facebook, and Yelp may not be as beneficial as engaging in YouTube and Google+. Although it cannot be definitively stated from the results of this study that YouTube and Google+ are more effective, it is generally clear that B&B proprietors could benefit from a reevaluation of their current marketing strategies. As technologies and social media tools change, B&B proprietors should consistently engage in this sort of evaluation to ensure that they are maximizing the benefits of their limited marketing resources.

Finally, recommended that B&B proprietors focus on converting brand awareness into measurable sales. Although brand awareness is crucial to business success, ultimately B&Bs must book guests in order to survive. As small businesses, B&Bs are important to the hotel industry and the economy at large. Therefore, it is important that social media marketing campaigns are designed to generate revenue. Marketing demands considerable time and money resources, and B&B establishments will better thrive if they are able to recoup these expenditures directly. The results of this study show that B&Bs have room to improve the degree to which their social media outreach efforts generate tangible sales.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this study, it can be concluded that, when controlling for the covariates (location, number of rooms, when open), there is a strong relationship between perceived social media outreach efforts and both perceived brand awareness and perceived percent of online sales. This suggests that as B&B proprietors engage in more social media outreach efforts, they see increases in the public's awareness of their businesses and in the volume of online sales.

Interestingly, the effect sizes for both hypotheses were large ( $f_i = .70$  and  $f_i = .51$ , respectively), indicating that the association between engagement in social media and business outcomes could be quite strong. It is also intriguing that none of the covariates (location, number of rooms, or

when open) were associated with these effects, suggesting that social media engagement has benefits for B&Bs regardless of the characteristics of individual establishments. The sample and variables were described, and the results of the tests for assumptions and multicollinearity were reported. Data conformed to the assumptions for multivariate regression analysis, and no problems with multicollinearity were observed. Based on hierarchical regression analyses, both null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative hypotheses supported.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The diverse changes in the online environment have forced people to give a rethink to their business strategy for selling and buying of products and services. Businesses are increasingly using the [internet](#) for commercial activities (Teo, 2005; As'ad et al., 2012; Ghouri et al., 2012; Anjum et al., 2012) as well as the [communications](#) at various levels. **Social media marketing** is a new concept, which allows people from all over the world to promote their products as well as to communicate and share ideas or opinions with each other on one platform. According to Chikandiwa et al. (2013), **Social media marketing is described as a system, which allows marketers to engage, collaborate, interact and harness intelligent crowdsourcing for marketing purposes. Social media marketing has given opportunity to vendors, organizations, business partners, purchasers, sellers, buyers or consumers to buy, sell or advertise their products and services through these social media platforms.** Use of social media has also become very much popular as a marketing tool for the establishment and [management](#) of customer relationships and to influence the people shopping behaviour (Ruane et al., 2013; Lagrosen et al., 2014). Social media not only provides a platform to disseminate information about the products and services offered by organisations, but it also provides a platform for conversations and [attending to the customer expectations or views.](#) Firms have the opportunity to shift relationships with the consumers from dialogue to triologue, in which consumers engage in meaningful relationships with one another and with the firms (Hlavinka et al., 2011; Lipsmann et al., 2012; Mangold et al., 2009; Tsimonis et al., 2014). **For example: Starbucks, Nike, Coca-Cola and Dell have successfully used social media to obtain customer feedback, create new products and offers, strengthen customer loyalty and engage in online dialogue with followers** (Beuker, 2009; Gallagher and Ransbotham, 2010; Mitic et al., 2012). **Social Media Marketing** is defined as any form of direct or indirect marketing that is used to build awareness, recognition, recall, and action for a brand, business, product, person, or other entity and is carried out using the tools of the social Web, such as blogging, micro-blogging, social networking, social bookmarking and content sharing (Gunelius, 2011).

**Social media marketing** industry report 2015 (Stelzner, 2015), which have studied over 3700 marketers with the goal of understanding how they are using social media to grow and promote their businesses, presents a number of significant facts:

- \* 96% of marketers indicated that they are participating in **social media marketing**;
- \* A significant 92% of marketers indicate that social media is important for their business;
- \* At least 91% of marketers want to know the most effective social tactics and the best ways to engage their audience with social media; *(there is need for more information regarding social media marketing, original work worthy)*
- \* A significant 57% of marketers use video in their marketing; however, 72% want to learn more about video marketing and plan on increasing their use of video; *(there is need for more information regarding social media marketing, original work worthy)*
- \* **Facebook** and LinkedIn are the two most important social network for marketers.

The top two benefits of **social media marketing** are increased exposure and increasing traffic. A significant 90% of all marketers indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increased traffic was the second major benefit, with 77% reporting positive results as shown in the Figure 1 (Stelzner, 2015).

Figure 1. Benefits of **social media marketing** [Figure omitted]

Number of users in the social media sites is increasing very rapidly. According to Statista.com (<http://www.statista.com>), In 2010, the number of social media users was 0.97 billion which had increased in 2013 to 1.61 billion and is expected to reach 2.33 billion by 2017. Therefore, it is quite clear that the growth of **social media marketing** is enormous worldwide. Over the last 2 years in India, many people have been engaged directly or indirectly through these social media sites. People in India are connected to these **social media channels for chatting, making friends, blogging, tweeting, sharing their views, business promotions, marketing, etc.** **Many company brands like MTV India, Channel V, Tata Photon, Tata Docomo,** etc. had engaged with these **social media marketing** sites. **Many Indian top celebrities** had also engaged with these **social media marketing** sites for the promotion of their albums or movies, serials, etc. Many Indian **political parties** have been involved in campaigning and engaging the people through these social media sites. Recently Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), who won the 2014 Indian Lok Sabha elections and became the number one party. BJP and their leaders including the Prime minister candidate

have been engaged and communicated the people of India via the social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, etc. **The BJP has been elected as the government of India is one example of the power of social media marketing popularity in India.** The other example is the newly elected government of Delhi i.e. the AAP (Aam Aadmi Party) who has won the 67 seats out of 70 seats in 2015 (<http://www.elections.in.>). The AAP has accessed the different social media channels during Delhi Assembly elections to have a better connect with the people of Delhi. A study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) (<http:// ASSOCHAM.ORG>) states that the political parties spend around 3000-4000 million rupees for their publicity campaigns on social and digital media. The report by ASSOCHAM also states that social networking websites and similar technology giants will generate better revenue this year due to the digital campaigns. The spending on digital media has reached such a level that the Election Commission of India has made it compulsory for the political parties to disclose their advertising budgets on social and digital media (Dutta, 2014).

Inspired by the power of social media to engage users in virtual relationships, organizations began seeking ways to immerse into 'people's internet' and learn to leverage the 'likes', 'shares' and 'comments' for profit making (Andriole, 2010; Culnan et al., 2010; Mitic et al., 2012). People in this new era have not only shifted their interests to online shopping, but have also become active in social media to search information about the product or services before any purchase decision. **From the social media marketing point of view, the root of any business to be successful will be gaining the customer trust and maintain their reputation in the competitive environment, So that the new users can also get engaged without any hesitation or risk.**

According to Gartner (2012), "Consumers increased reliance on social media ratings and reviews will see an increase in enterprise spending on paid social media ratings and reviews, making up to 10-15% of all reviews by 2014. **However, analysts predict that increased media attention on fake social media and reviews will result is strong litigations against many strong brands.** *(previous article mentioned how it is hard to stop "fake news")* Although the consumer trust in social media is currently low, consumer perception of tightened government regulations and increased media exposure of fake social media ratings and reviews will ultimately increase consumer trust in new and existing social media ratings and reviews. It indicates that trust entails a vital role in helping users

overcome perceptions of risk and uncertainty in the use and acceptance of new technology (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou and Gegen, 2004; Li et al., 2008). According to Almenarez et al. (2011), trust is a measure that describes the trustworthiness of individual entities based on previous knowledge, common knowledge, and monitoring schemes. However, trust is not a static concept and changes over the time. Correspondingly, the trust management becomes important in maintaining and managing user trust. This paper focuses on the importance of trust management in social media marketing.

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ASPECTS

Social media marketing has changed the pace of today's online world and has become an integral part of the online marketing campaign. Social media is all about the ways in which the user's or firm's can create, connect and share content online. It changes the people view on marketing for buying and selling of goods and services. Few years back, companies reached their consumers through trade shows, print advertising, or other traditional marketing methods like televisions, newspapers, magazines, etc. But today, consumers start their shopping experience by looking on the internet by using search engines, blogosphere and social media sites. All businesses aim for profit. Social media is not just as marketing tool, it has given a new way for running a business effectively. According to Gartner report by Sarner (2010), "While investments and growth in social marketing is assured during the next two years, the ultimate success of social marketing will depend on how well marketers can accelerate through the inevitable social expectation bust and make social marketing projects more than just 'engagement' objectives and then actually tie social activities to clear and measurable business objectives. Far too many companies are still following the hype of 'social' and have created or participated in social media without a plan". Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, LinkedIn, Orkut, Google+, etc., have taken a full advantage from their users like clients, business partners, firms or customers and provides them a platform, where they can communicate and share their ideas and content to each other. Social media marketing can be an inexpensive way to communicate and promote a company rather than putting together a huge marketing team or a prohibitive budget which becomes very much expensive and time consuming. Traditionally methods like Television, Phone, E-mail, Print media, etc. for promotion and advertising prove to be much costly as compared to social

**media marketing.** Here, the marketers can pay for CPC (Cost per Click) or CPM (Cost per Mille) model and can even start with just few dollars as compared to thousands and millions of dollar when advertising in traditional media. *(way to analyze social media)* The important aspects of the social media can be summarized as the following.

### 2.1. Social Media Marketing Channels

In today's online world, so many different **social media marketing** channels are available for **marketing**. The most famous **social media marketing** channels are:

\* **Facebook** (<http://www.facebook.com>): Facebook provides a platform, where people come to socialize, talk, and share their views to each other. According to facebook.com, the business is made for the customers, build relationship with them, reach new people and drive sales using this channel. The Facebook said, when the user or business have a strong presence on facebook site, then their business has access to the most powerful kind of word-mouth-marketing recommendations between friends. Facebook offers the following steps for advertising:

1. Build your page. Everything starts your page;
2. Connect with the people, ads help you to reach the right peoples;
3. Engage your audience, quality post keep people interested;
4. Influence friends of fans, expand your reach through friends.

\* **Twitter** (<http://www.twitter.com>): Twitter is another social networking website which allows organizations or companies to endorse their products and services information to a worldwide audience. It is the place where people are more inclined to listen than to speak. It has given opportunity to user to post articles in support of their business or advertise sale and link back to their website. The use of a product can be described in short messages (or tweet) particularly in 140 words, that followers are more likely to be read and understand. Twitter have some guidelines that are required to be followed by the advertisers:

1. The users must understand the twitter terms and services, rules and all best practices;
2. **Marketers or advertisers are required to comply with legal requirements as shown in the twitter site and must keep the user's security;** *(not something mentioned in facebook)*
3. Don't distribute spam harmful code or other disruptive content. Advertisers should not put any type of content that may harm or disturb the others;

4. It is advised that only promote honest, authentic and relevant content. Be transparent and accurate;
5. Set high editorial standards for the twitter content you create;
6. Set high standards for the off twitter connections you create.

Twitter has become a more popular and important marketing tool for many organizations, brands and individuals. **Many brands use Twitter successfully for rapid customer service. It allows an immediate broadcast of news to the dedicated followers and fans.** For example Dell lists several twitter channels like [www.dell.com/twitter](http://www.dell.com/twitter).

\* **LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>)**: LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network site. It offers the platform where users or company's do B2B marketing. For example if some company looking to sell stationeries at a discounted rate to small-midsize companies, then it is the best platform to connect and use. It has also become a good platform to post professional jobs:

1. This is a fast growing social network with over 300 million registered users in over 200 countries and territories. More than 2.8 million businesses with LinkedIn company Pages, and professional signing up at a rate of approximately two new member per-second (<http://www.linkedin.com>);
2. A user can **easily discover the people employed by a certain company**, or the various types of businesses a certain persons have worked for. So if user or organization is looking to connect with industry professionals and generate leads in their businesses, LinkedIn is the best place for that and it is recommended that user or organization should integrate this channel as an integral part of their **social media marketing** strategy.

\* **Google+ (<http://plus.google.com>)**: Google introduced in late 2011 its social networking site Google+, which aims to **make sharing on the web more like sharing in real life. Check out circles, Events and Hangouts.**

1. Google Plus is a great way to promote a blog and really push the inbound marketing. By targeting 'circles' on Google Plus, user can share content and drive people to their own website;

2. It hosts a large number of communities, where users can engage in conversation either publicly or privately. It has also offers **Google Plus Business, which provides a great alternative to Facebook's pages;**

3. Google Hangouts (a part of Google+) provides users with a free video calling platform that they can use to connect. This platform can also be used by brands for inexpensive business seminars and open forums, which are great for connecting with clients and partners.

## 2.2. Social Media Monitoring Tools

When a business organization uses social media as a merk identified the social media platform where the audience or users spend most of the time, then it's time to **start listening the audience, customers or users views and search out what kind of conversations they are having about the respective brand, or product(s) or service(s) and reflects the changes in the strategy of business implementation accordingly if necessary, through the help of the social media monitoring tools such as:**

\* **TweetDeck (<https://web.tweetdeck.com>)**: It is a **free desktop application that combines Twitter and Facebook monitoring** with search for a multidimensional social application that also allows for publishing;

\* **Viralheat (<https://www.viralheat.com>)**: This is another social media monitoring tool, that tracks hundreds of video sharing sites, twitter, **blogs, social networks, groups and forums in real time.** It offers the **capability to restrict the profiles by location** and offers a great way to power regional marketing and monitoring campaigns;

\* **Social Mention (<http://www.socialmention.com>)**: It is a social media search and analysis platforms that aggregates user generated content from across the world into a single stream of information;

\* **Google Alerts (<https://www.google.co.in/alerts>)**: This is a free tool available on internet for **monitoring millions of blogs and new sites using target keywords;** receive streaming or batch reports;

\* **Hootsuite (<https://hootsuite.com>)**: It allows to monitor several social networks and post messages on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and Foursquare **via a single dashboard.** Marketers

can schedule messages, communicate with coworkers and assign tasks. It has a free version as well as a paid version that will allow you to manage the entire team of social media superstars;

\* **TweetReach (<https://tweetreach.com>):** This tool analyzes your tweets by who is reading them and how they are being shared. It gives a basic picture of how far a particular tweet has traveled as well as how many people search a hashtag term;

\* **Klout (<https://klout.com>):** Klout measures the "influencer" score by looking at various social media interactions such as followers, retweeters, sharers, +1's. This isn't just about who responds, but how many of your posts or tweets are shared or retweeted; *(algorithm?)*

\* **SocialPointer (<http://www.socialpointer.com>):** It allows you to monitor social mentions and respond in real-time. You can also monitor what your competitor is saying and get instant feedback on your company;

\* **Agorapulse (<https://www.agorapulse.com>):** It focuses on Facebook and allows you to see side-by-side comparisons of your brand and others. It also offers contest and promotion applications as well. It is a paid tool and starts at \$29/month;

\* **GaggleAMP (<https://gaggleamp.com>):** This allows you to capitalize on your employees' friends and connections. You create a Gaggle within your organization and allow co-workers and employees to send out a social media message that you provide. You're reaching your own fans as well as their networks. It is a paid tool and starts at \$25/month;

\* **Sproutsocial (<http://sproutsocial.com>):** This is wonderful tool to help you in finding new customers and growing your social media presence. With this tool, you can monitor all your clients' social media profiles as well as schedule Twitter content. It is a paid tool and starts \$39/month.

### 2.3. Different Domains of Social Media Marketing

Social media gives a platform to marketers or advertisers to interact, discuss, listen and respond to the users in an effective and timely manner. Correspondingly, the social media not only helps the businesses to promote their products and services to the direct customers. But, it can also help in other forms of marketing. The most widely used applications are:

1. **Business to Business (B2B) Marketing:** B2B marketing can take place between a vendor and a purchaser of goods and services through these online social media marketing sites. Social

**media** has become a potential tool for this type of marketing as most of the big organizations are using the social media now days. The B2B channels can be used to **secure procedures based on encryption and authorization level, with payment by predetermined credit terms.** For example, Alibaba.com is the full B2B site, it used the Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/AlibabaUS>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/AlibabaTalk>), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/alibaba.com>), and Youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/TeamAlibaba>);

2. **Business to Consumer Marketing (B2C):** B2C marketing means that transaction can take place between an individual and a shop or firm selling goods and services through these online **social media marketing** channels. **This is more like an extension of catalogue shopping, through mail order and telephone ordering using credit cards payments. The advantage of this type of marketing is convenience.** For example, Shopclues.com where business products are directly provided to their users. Shopclues.com also uses the different **social media** channels for their **marketing** such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ShopClues>), Twitter (<https://twitter.com/shopclues>), Google+ (<https://plus.google.com/+Shopclues-India/posts>), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/shopclues>), Pinterest (<https://www.pinterest.com/shopclues/>) and Youtube ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnxPAa\\_6EL5gg10\\_FRq6Zjw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnxPAa_6EL5gg10_FRq6Zjw));

3. **Consumer to Consumer (C2C) Marketing:** The attention to the C2C interaction would be as useful as attention to the business-business (B2B) relations or business-customers (B2C) relations. This type of **online marketing can take place directly between customers, without intervention of any business as middleman.** One example of this type of transaction in **social media marketing** is Olx.in. The platform Olx.in uses social media channels such as Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/olxindia>), Google+ (<https://plus.google.com/113395767313404239895/posts>) and Twitter ([https://twitter.com/OLX\\_India](https://twitter.com/OLX_India)). The different type of online **marketing** used **social media** channels not only for their profit or convenience but also for engaging more number of users trust in it. Since, more number of users trust in it, they discuss their experience with other people

via social media sites which results more trust. Therefore, the trust ability of that company increase in the hearts of users, especially for the novel user.

## 2.4. Increasing Social Media Traffic

Number of people engaged the social media of company, basically reflects the success of **Social Media Marketing** (*other article said it depends*) (e.g. number of likes in the facebook, number of followers in the tweeter, number of connections in LinkedIn etc.). **Social Media Marketing Managers** do a lot to improve the network traffic towards their business site from **social media marketing** sites.

Few such tasks are:

1. **Managing Conversations:** Conversation is the key for communicating. Conversation brings audience to your website from the social media sites. **When you are engaged with your audience, they will be able to know you, like you and trust you.** If they have trust on you, they could be more actively engaged in your website. The customers will then become participants in the conversations rather than a simple viewer. This will effectively increase the business potential. For example, good marketers always try to post replies to both positive and negative feedbacks and increase the effectiveness of conversations;
2. **Running Contests:** **Marketers can offer a number of contest for the users on the social media sites, that can draw active attention of the users** (e.g. Best Picture Contest on facebook, Lucky Draw on opinion polls, Maximum Tweets contest etc.). This helps a lot in getting the contact details of the contest participant as well as in acquiring new customers. This can significantly result in **getting the details of people, who may be interested in your products and services.** For example if you are a software developer, you could give away a free software redesign to prompt other to use your services. When people enter in your contest, you automatically have a list of potential customers;
3. **Testimonials:** They are the most powerful form of marketing. Whenever you do business with someone **you ask for testimonial or better yet recommendation.** The testimonials go a long ways in establishing the trust of new as well as existing users;
4. **Content:** Content is an important for driving force to attract the network traffic to your business website from your social websites. If the viewer does not find anything attractive, you

will have a hard time getting them to come back. Content writing and content management has become a big business nowadays;

5. **Offers:** Offers provide a wonderful tool to drive traffic and sales to your website. It enables businesses to reach customers with a promotion or advertisement, so that they can share with their friends or communities. Social media specific offers have become very much popular in the present day business scenario.

## 2.5. People Engagement and Success Stories

Anyone having an internet connection and account on any of the social media platform becomes directly or indirectly involved in the social media marketing. People can access these media via different digital devices like desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones, mobiles, etc. The mobile users are continuously increasing mobile devices have become the most important tools for success of social media marketing sites. For example, a user can access the Facebook from their mobile phone on anytime, anywhere basis and this pushes up the social media marketing efforts.

With the increasing engagement of people, a lot of success stories already exist, a few of them are:

\* Banking sector has been using these social media marketing channels for their customer or user reviews. Indian banks such as ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and SBI are among the top 10 Banks with Social Media presence as per a survey by Financial Brand (<http://thefinancialbrand.com>) in the second quarter of 2015. Banks can communicate their users or customers via social media sites. Social media marketing enabled banks to regain the customer trust, which has been lost due to the recent economical crisis and the increased use of e-banking (Bonson et al., 2011; Ernest et al., 2011; Gritten, 2011 and Chikandwa et al, 2013);

\* News or media channels from all over the world have also accepted this online social mediamarketing concept. They have been using the social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and so on, for their promotion and marketing of their programs. They can also get the reviews from their users or viewers. So that some type trust is establish between the news or media channel and the user. Therefore, these social media sites are helpful in trust building in between the parties;

\* Newspaper, magazines, journals, business organizations, industries, and so on, has been endorsing via the **social media marketing** channels. For example TimesofIndia newspaper company addresses their audience via facebook site account

(<https://www.facebook.com/TimesofIndia>) or via twitter site account

(<https://twitter.com/timesofindia>);

\* Many colleges and universities are giving information to their students or users or viewers through these social marketing channels. For example, Banaras Hindu University

([www.bhu.ac.in](http://www.bhu.ac.in)) in India who addresses their people via Facebook site account

(<https://www.facebook.com/Banaras.University>);

\* Different social welfare programs are also going on, in these social media sites. For example, Social media, particularly Twitter, have given a greater voice to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities around the world. Individuals and groups have used social media to gather, physically and virtually, to promote and support LGBT issues and rights -- and they have done so in countries that are both are tolerant and intolerant of LGBT rights. The United States, Russia and Egypt -- have used social media to give voice to those who have been previously quieted by society

(<http://www.salzburg.umd.edu/unesco/social-media-and-lgbt-community>). Therefore, this types of programs give some level of trust between the people and the government or between the parties.

Markets try every bit and piece to attract customers to their social media platforms and retain them. The increased number of users help in the business promotions and hence in the business growth. However, with the increasing number of customers and users, more trust and trust establishing strategies are needed in order to retain and acquire the customers. Any breach of mutual trust can render the whole **social media marketing** strategy useless and hence the loss of goodwill and financial exchequer. Correspondingly, the trust management strategies become very much vital in the **social media marketing**.

### 3. STAKEHOLDERS PERSPECTIVE IN **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Trust management in **social media marketing** plays a crucial role in retention and acquisition of the customers. The users tend to trust their circle of friends or colleagues much more than they

trust the company's advertisements *(get personal)* (Woodcock et al, 2010; Hamid et al, 2012). If social media is used correctly and efficiently, it can help businesses to grow quickly, easily and profitably, by building an essential emotional connection with people and establishing a trustworthy relationship. Since, users are enormously growing in these social sites, the responsibility of social media administrators has increased for maintaining and managing the trust between the users. Mayer et al. (1995), define trust as "the willingness of a party to be a vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the truster, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party". In the relation of consumer trust in e-commerce, trust is also referred as "one believes in, and is willing to depend on, another party" (McKnight et al., 2002) and "trust is driven by past experience, long term orientations, positive trusting stance, and feelings of control" (Jarvenpaa et al., 1999). According to Bourkerche et al., (2008), trust can be described as a mutual relationship established between any two entities for a specific purpose or action. Trust is established based on prior dealings, knowledge and past transaction experiences with user. Through this trust, a trust relationship is built between the parties involved in transactions. In social media marketing, trust will be built based on conversation, listening and responding to the audience or users. Based on this trust, some kind of trustworthy relationship can be established between the parties involved. Trust management concept becomes very much important in managing and maintaining the trust record of the parties involved in successful transaction through these social media sites. Trust record contains the vast amount of trust information related to the user. For example the level of trust, prior successful transactions, trust value and so on.

Social media marketing and its relationship with different stakeholders such as customers, companies, government, and third party sites can be managed and maintained by using the trust management mechanisms. Different stakeholders of trust management in the social mediamarketing have been shown in the Figure 2 and each of these stakeholders may have their own perspectives and interests. For example the Government is interested to see that their law requirements were fulfilled or not, customers are interested to see that their [privacy](#) and security

requirements are met or not, and so on. All these trust issues can be handled by the effective trust management.

Figure 2. Different stakeholders in **social media marketing** channels [Figure omitted]

**Social media** sites will require some type of trust management mechanism for retaining the users and attracting new customers. Marketers or advertisers, who understand the role of customers or users trust for their businesses better than their competitors are more likely to develop some kind of emotional or sentimental brand in the heart of a user and can begin a trustworthy relationship with them. This can happen only by gaining the trust of their parties or users involved in it and that can happen only by understanding the perspective of different stakeholders.

### 3.1. Customer Perspective

Social media customers can be broadly classified as: Direct customers and Indirect customers.

Direct customers are those, who are directly involved as a user for these social media sites, e.g. if Bob had direct account on Facebook site. Indirect customers are those who are not the directly

associated as member or user of these social media sites but they can be using these social media sites by their company or other friendly accounts. For example Dell company had an account on facebook site and the user of Dell has an account on their Dell company site but that user may access Facebook for their purpose without having an account on that site. So, those types of user are indirectly associated with the social media sites. There are many things that are expected by the customers from the social media sites to trust these sites: *(indirect users help with increased awareness significantly)*

\* Customers see, whether the following social media websites will serve for his or her needs of the goods or services i.e. is social media site can help them in a trustworthy manner to select the goods or services;

\* Whether the social media site can maintain the customer security and privacy is very much important? Customers want security about their personal information like photos from the social media sites. So, that information is not misused for any illegal purposes;

\* Customers look for convenience in accessing their accounts and communicating with others from the **social media marketing** sites;

\* It is important that whether the social **provides a legal ability** for any wrong attempts, such as hacking, fake accounts or faulty users. Customers are attracted towards those social media sites, which provide a structured way for controlling these things;

\* Another thing that customers needs from these social media sites is the high performance like **speed and accuracy**. Although it depends upon the available internet speed, but does social media sites will provide more performance in slow speed internet?, becomes an important question for the customers. For example Facebook will open easily when the users have slow speed internet connection as compared to the heavy social media sites like LinkedIn, which takes more time to open.

### **3.2. Government Point of View of Trust to these Social Media Sites**

Government is an important stakeholder for social media sites. What government wants from these social media sites to increase the trust between are: *(make sure social media complying with the government)*

\* Is the social media site providing services according to law to the users? Government wants the social media sites to provide services according to the national, demographic area or local laws;

\* The next thing that government wants from these social media sites is that they should provide the complete information for applicable laws in their sites to maintain transparency to the customers or users. So, that government can trust into the social media site and can mark in their records as trustable site;

\* The social media site needs a proper mechanism for maintaining and managing the failures or violations of laws. Therefore, if anybody violates the law, they should take immediate action for that. This mechanism should be transparent to government. So, that government can increase their trust level to that social media sites. Therefore, proper transparency is required between the government and the social media site laws so that whenever these social media sites dealing with their online consumer or user they have to transparent with their government;

\* The social media sites are required to be transparent to the government regarding the financial transactions between the clients or users. They need to provide accurate information regarding their financial transactions and business dealings;

\* Governments also wants from these social media sites that they should have fair business practices with their users like customers, clients or business partners, and vice versa. Cheating

should not be done from any side (i.e. user as well as social media site), to and from the government. So that the trust can be developed and maintained between the parties and the government.

### **3.3. Company's Point of View of Trust to these Social Media Sites**

This is important to consider the expectations of the companies, which are directly associated with the social media site for their endorsement and promotion of their products and services.

They may have a direct account to the social media site and may have a free or a paid account in the social media sites according to the company's need (but mostly paid accounts). They may have the following point of views:

\* Is there any mechanism for social media site to maintain and prevent the company reputation from fake accounts or users? This means that what steps does social media site will take, if any user tries to damage their company reputation. For example, an unsatisfied or fake user can damage the company reputation through the social media. A fake user can make a fake account related to the name of a company, and deal wrongly with the consumer. Social media sites will be required to handle such type of threats. So that company can trust the social media sites; *(original work idea: look at ways to prevent fake accounts from being created)*

\* Do they provide any extra services, applications or tools for communication between the company and their employees feedback?

\* What extra services and application they will provide for their paid accounts users? Does these services are mentioned in their legal agreement? Does social media site provide these services according to the agreements signed?

\* What are the legal provisions if the there is a breach of contract by the social media sites;

\* What kind of security and protection is available for the data of the company.

### **3.4. Third Party Point of View of Trust to these Social Media Sites and Vice Versa**

Third parties are those who are not directly as a user or customer from these social media sites but they will be providing their services to these social media sites such as security, database management, etc. What third party wants from these social media site for trust building and vice versa are:

\* Third parties want from these social media sites that their payment will be in time. Is payment will be going according to the SLA contract or not? Social media site wants that they will be paying according to the performance and quality as mentioned in the SLA contract;

\* Social media site should regularly inform the third party about the services performance that they were providing. For example, is third party services performance providing continue as accurate or not? Is there any loss or gain in performance? Regular update about performance to third party providing will be beginning some level of relationship and trust among each other;

\* **The SLA (Service Level Agreement) contract is the main root of beginning the relationships between each other. So it must be carefully written and followed.**

#### **4. TRUST MANAGEMENT ISSUE IN SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Trust Management acts as a mediator between the stakeholder and **social media marketing** site. It will manage all the trust records of different stakeholders from different viewpoints. It will be helpful for making business decisions. Based on different viewpoints from different stakeholders, trust management system must consider a number of trust issues.

##### **4.1. Trust Issues in the Social Media Sites and Businesses**

Social media sites can increase their trust among the business users by assuring the following:

\* The range of services provided to the business users. e.g The companies may be interested to learn more about their audience's likes and dislikes, behaviour etc. beyond their own specific products and services. E.g. in the format of [market research](#). Correspondingly, the social media sites should ensure that such analysis and research tools and facilities will be available to the business users to enhance their productivity and hence the trust in the particular **media** site;

\* **Social media marketing** sites provide third-party users experiences, but it is also required that social media site also provides assurances regarding these third-party users that they are all genuine. If third-party is not genuine, it generates lack of trust. So, marketers or social media site should consider this point before using third-party services;

\* It is very easy for any malicious or anonymous user to use any social media platform without giving much detail and creates his fake account and by that fake account they will promote negativity for anyone related to person, product, business, company or country. How social sites will work to control such incidents. Because it is very difficult for social sites to identify and

pick that user who promote negativity due to any personal or professional reasons. So, social sites will require to do work on these issues for trust building between their users. Presently, no social site answers this question publically that how they will catch that culprit. What social site will do in these issues is that they only close that malicious user account but they never find the real identity of that user. So that user again open his another anonymous account in their or another social site and promote negativity. Hence, social media sites should use good identity management practices and the procedures must be documented well and assured to the corporate uses;

- \* Proper monitoring, listening and deployment will be required for individual user or customer by these social sites. If not, it may leads to the lack of trust among other users or parties;

- \* Social media sites should ensure that their user comply with the laws at local, state or national level regulations before they can promote their products and services;

- \* They also must ensure that their users private information should be not disclosed at any manner without their permission to anybody;

- \* Users accessing theses social sites from all over the world, so it is the duty for these social media sites to provide proper guidelines to their users regarding promotions, advertisements and so on. So that they cannot breach the security, privacy and law for any country regulations.

Social media sites must also clarify the point that what appropriate actions can take place against an advertiser or promoter, if they violate the policies, rules, term and services?

- \* Social media sites should provide online help centers that will work in a 24x7, in a specified time limit to listen and to assure for solving the problems of their customers or users. Listening and responding from and to users are the two most useful tools for trust establishment;

- \* Account profile that includes username, profile picture, name, locations, websites and information regarding the product and services should be ensured to be accurate. So, that the user may get assurance regarding if anything goes wrong in buying or selling the products or services, a relevant action can be initiated from the side of social media site, against that user, vendor or company;

- \* Social sites should guarantee their users, vendors, and business partners that their private and confidential data and integrity is maintained;

\* Social media site also assure the users for availability and recovery of data or services in case of failure occurs, it may be a natural disaster or software or hardware or network failure;

\* Social sites must ensure their users that they will be able to help both online and offline, if necessary.

#### **4.2. Building Customer Trust on Social Media Marketing Campaigns**

Business companies or organizations involved in advertising or promoting their product and services through these social media sites must consider the following trust issues when they are dealing with online user via social media channel:

\* Companies which ignore the voice of their customers will see diminishing loyalty, and a growing resentment among the online users. It loses the trust between them. So they have to hear the voice of their customers and must attend all the reviews and responses of the users. The marketing efforts should not be one sided;

\* Businesses need to monitor and understand the customer needs and expectations and should plan their campaigns accordingly. Business organizations or individuals can increase their presence by offering discounts, schemes, various types of contests, social awareness programs and so on. So that stakeholders may engage in their offerings and if they like it. This will automatically increase the trust;

\* Companies must understand that **operating online business is much more different than the traditional offline methods, because only the business organization is directly responsible for everything that is written or advertised in social media sites.** Consumers or users only see or hear what the organizations write. If responsible persons from organizations misspell, misunderstood or mistakenly write a blog or tweet or advertise, then consumer or user is understands wrongly, which results in falling the business organization reputation and trust among the users or consumers. **So, business organization must be very careful when writing or tweeting or blogging in the social sites;**

\* **Companies will be required to continuously monitor and deploy their business through these social media sites that what feedback is given by the users.** Feedback from social media sites helps drive both future business as well as marketing strategies. However, if the feedbacks are not responded well, they may create a breach of trust among the users;

\* In the Social media sites, if users like the content they will share it with their own communities. So, the content before placing by a business company or individuals for advertising in these social media sites has to be carefully considered and checked. **Content should be attractive, genuine and relevant to the particular promotion.** The more valuable is the content, more value it will add to the business and consequently the more valuable users will increase and trust spread easily across the communities;

\* **Corporate Blogs must be written within the company and not by an outside agency. The personality and voice be both genuine and consistent.** So stakeholders can have better familiarity and trust.

#### **4.3. Establishing Brand using Trust Management**

Brands offers some level of inbuilt people trust, there is no doubt about it. According to Davis et al.,1999, brands are also important to the development of trust in web based relationship marketing. **Brand is the trust mark that is the cue for all the past trust generating activity and in the absence of human touch; it can be a symbol of quality and assurance that is capable of building trust** (Shankar et al, 2002). People have some level of inherent trust on the brands.

Whenever they plan to buy any product or service, they first think about that brand in which they already maintain trust and customers always try to search items in a trusted brand. So, there is no question remaining about that - Can brand engage customers or users?

Brands may be a people, product or company or any other enterprise business. **Branding may be done through advertisements, endorsements, and promotion via these social media sites. Trust is one of the most important factors associated with branding** (Checksin Research, 2000).

Marketers or businesses who understand the role and the value of customer or user engagement faster than their competitors are more likely to develop brands and more trustable customers.

Identify engaged customers and **start some kind of brand ambassador programme to further accelerate the relationship and energize their word of mouth.** However, in **social media marketing**, the ideal customers or more valuable customer or user, does not necessarily mean to be someone who buys a lot. **The ideal user or customer could be an influencer, who is a small irregular buyer or user but who posts rating and reviews, as the reviews could influence others people or user.** In establishing trust, marketers need to know about the sentiment; views and

affinity a user or person has towards a brand. Branding and trusting can make a reputation in the market; reputation can bring or attract new users toward it. Trusted user recommends other user for the brand that made a reputation in the market via social media sites. Hence, branding and trusting are closely related concerning the social media marketing and can have high impact on the business.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Businesses have been using the different social media marketing channels from the long period of time for the endorsement, advertisement and promotion of their goods and services and this has enormously grown with the growth of the internet. The main reason behind this is that businesses find a direct and easy communication mechanism with their customers or audiences. Since, satisfied customers are vital to a business to be successful and profitable, therefore it has becomes necessary to develop and maintain customer trust through satisfaction and assurances. The social media marketing efforts will be certainly more successful if the trust management is given high importance by both the social media sites and the marketing companies taking care of the different associated issues. A strong trust management effort will help to acquire, transmit and increase or decrease the level of trust between different stakeholders and will certainly go a long way in the business success. It will help the businesses or firms to grow more rapidly through social media viral effect by deploying the opinions of their users or audiences into their marketing strategy. On the other hand, a poorly managed trust can render the marketing efforts useless.