

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON HOW THE EPIDEMIC HAS INCREASED THE NEED FOR RESTAURANTS' SOCIAL MEDIA AND CRM TOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Post-pandemic, online platforms are becoming aesthetically attractive on social media. The restaurants are using various CRM tools to manage their operations. CRM enables businesses to get to know their customers and carefully manage their relationships with them. It also aids in the development of relationships with potential customers at your organisation. The paper aims to review the overcome of restaurants post-pandemic and to analyze the role of social media and the use of CRM tools. The study further proposes to study the use of social media and its impact in restaurants pre- and post-pandemic and explores the benefits of digital media tools and CRM on customer buying decisions post-pandemic. This study is based on qualitative research on how the pandemic has increased the need for restaurants' social media and CRM tools post-pandemic. The findings suggest that the perception of the consumer has changed regarding food safety and hygiene. The preference has changed from out-dining to more home cooking and online ordering. Consequently, the food industry and eateries are modifying their food management systems and hygiene practices to attract customers.

Keywords: Pandemic, social media, CRM, Restaurants.

INTRODUCTION

Due to the epidemic induced by Covid-19, the food service sector contracted, resulting in the prolonged closure of more than 25% of food company owners, resulting in over 2.4 million job losses in India. According to research by the National Restaurant Association of India, it had a fifty-three per cent decline in the fiscal year 2021 compared to the previous year (Sharma, 2021). Accordingly, the importance of digital tools for customer management has been given more attention post-covid-19 through the CRM process. As a mediator, customer engagement completely transforms the benefits of social media technologies, customer flow experience, and customer engagement into favourable brand loyalty levels, word of mouth, and firm performance. Restaurant owners use CRM to attract, keep, and partner with chosen customers to produce higher value for the business and the client (Mahmoud, Berman, Tehseen, & Hack-polay, 2022).

Customers are an essential part of any business activity, and so is the restaurant business. Customers not only contribute to restaurant revenue but also its future growth in the form of potential business through word-of-mouth marketing and publicity. Customers' utmost sense of importance draws the food & beverage operators to use various tools and processes that gauge their preferences and

aid in their behaviour insights. Here lies the need for Customer relationship management and various tools providing the facility. Every company need a method to organize, monitor, analyze, and develop present and projected consumers. The ideal method for restaurants to use the technology of CRM that relates to their system of food ordering.

On the other hand, customer relationship management tools and systems help in identifying trends in customer behaviour, and market accordingly. This helps in designing menus for the customers and helps in promoting the restaurant offerings. CRM helps the restaurants not only in leading in the right direction but also stores data, secure the data, assists in understanding the guest to a more personal level, CRM helps in designing various programs for customer loyalty, understanding sales trends, and helps in gaining a better return on investment for restaurants by giving the sufficient data to create an effective plan of marketing to a specific customer database.

Digital networks are among the most effective to reach out the clients and advertise your restaurant. With the advent of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, restaurant owners are looking for online networking management and planning solutions that generate awareness while generating an ROI. Social networking media has an impact on the restaurant sector in various ways,

ranging from consumer engagement to image and reputation. Images sharing and feedback sites pressure eateries to provide not just wonderful cuisine, but also visually pleasing dishes and excellent service (Storms, 2014).

LITERATURE REVIEW

CRM & ITS RELEVANCE WITH OPERATIONS FOCUSING ON CONSUMERS

The classic concept of CRM is still thought to be correct. However, because of the vast and rising popularity of social media platforms for both consumers and commercial enterprises, it is necessary to reconsider the classic CRM perspective (Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2021). CRM is defined as the systematic and structured management of interactions as they progress from inception through termination, with implementation across the different customer-facing interaction points (Reinartz et al., 2004). Social CRM is defined by marketing experts as "the integration of customer-facing operations, including procedures, systems, and technology, with emerging social media platforms to engage consumers in collaborative dialogues and deepen consumer relationships" (Trainor, 2012). So far, little research has been conducted to investigate the relationship between CRM characteristics and efficiency outcomes (Nancy Awadallah & Sherif Gamal, 2019; Wang & Kim, 2017).

The use of social media and its impact on restaurants

Social media is an affordable expense device that appears to be appropriate for many food outlets because of the need to control costs. However, it requires investment and skill to collect and successfully use information which puts a small food business in a difficult situation. Partaking in virtual entertainment is free, yet assets truly do should be distributed to create and keep an online entertainment presence. While autonomous eateries might be using web-based entertainment more now and again than chain eatery, they may not be exploiting virtual entertainment's maximum capacity particularly connected by observing web-based exercises connected with their organizations (Lepkowska-White, E., & Parsons, A. (2019). Alnsour, M., & Al Faour, H. R. (2020) in their study found that social media give an extraordinary source of data for consumers before choosing a restaurant to visit individuals go ahead and spread their viewpoints and considerations about items and

administrations they experience. Along these lines, online entertainment assists with understanding and dissecting client conduct. As an idea, web-based entertainment has numerous innate applications like online entertainment organizations, web journals, content networks, cooperative undertakings virtual game worlds, and virtual social universes. Web-based entertainment is valuable for two customers and Businesses. Shoppers typically look for data from any suitable asset before they choose to purchase, as a method of assessment of whether the item or administration offered is alluding to their requirements and needs (Alnsour, M., & Al Faour, H. R., 2020). Social media gives potential learning experiences to independent ventures to upgrade client connections, further develop deals and assemble their notorieties. Numerous independent companies might take via virtual entertainment since they dread missing out on these valuable open doors. They may likewise miss the mark on monetary assets to put resources into innovation and HR is expected to post content or screen data via virtual entertainment stages effectively. (Lepkowska-White, et. al., 2019).

Restaurants would be valuable to independent company cafés with the target of business supportability during this worldwide pandemic since it permits them to not just market their dishes to an enormous crowd but welcomes clients to arrange a dinner from the eatery when their inclinations about the thing are at its most elevated. (Itliong, J., 2020). The minute guests share their encounters during the consumption of food and drink at any food outlet, they are generating user-generated content (UGC). Food outlets have gained plenty of aid from social media in the past years. As frequently cafeteria proprietors are making use of social media to encourage their establishments, Researchers evaluated that social media accounts for around 80% of all cafeteria statements these days. There were a variety of ways in which social networking sites affected the hotel sector. Advertising communications, for instance, can be distributed via virtual networking websites such as Twitter & Facebook (Salazar, J. M. R., 2018). The hotels and other food outlets have effectively used media stands like Twitter and Facebook as active promotional tools to expand brand recognition or promote products or services. Many studies investigated the verity and frequently use of social media content and advised that social media examination using suitable methods could help

grow actual social media marketing policies. (Park, S. B., et. al.,2016). More commonly in hotels and restaurants, Guests believe in the comments given online by other guests for a particular outlet when choosing any outlet for dining (Lepkowska-White, et.al.,2019). Das, G., et.al. (2021) in their study describe that the food outlets, should not only be focused and dependent on new technology like QR code-based menus but also integrates a transformed pressure on health and safety even post-recovery. A portion of the progressions in the hospitality area might be standing, confirmed by lodgings' transition to sans contact robotization through versatile registrations, room keys on telephones, and voice-enacted room controls (Das, G., et.al.,2021).

Individuals converse often on digital media websites & smartphone technologies. Kumar, J., Konar, R., & Balasubramanian, K. (2020) found that the most recent patterns of showcasing incorporate advanced promotion, which includes mobile - brilliant advertising, long-range informal communication destinations, versatile applications, and portable site. The capacity of virtual word-to-mouth may not influence sales, but rather it boosts virtual entertainment presence and support. From a WOM showcasing viewpoint, endeavours to interface address a fundamental stage to lay out associations with clients to transform them into advocates for an organization's items in the end (Sashi, C.M., et. al., 2019). Fox, G., & Longart, P. (2016) discussed e-WOM that "any certain or pessimistic assertion made by potential, genuine, or previous clients about an item or organization, which is made accessible to a large number of individuals and foundations through the Internet". e-WOM happens in a more perplexing mechanically interceded setting while customary WOM happens regularly in an eye-to-eye or one-on-one design, with members in closeness, drawing from an abundance of social and context-oriented signs (Fox, G., & Longart, P.,2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic has made web-based businesses develop considerably, as numerous purchasers keep on shopping on the web. Organizations have encountered significant development in their web-based client base starting from the beginning of the pandemic, of which the business sectors with existing high transformation rates keep on developing. This unexpected difficulty in shopping in actual stores may be made by mental reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These consumers' perceptions have been found to intercede the connection between a buyer's capacity to evaluate the risk and their way of behaving intellectually (Dubbelink, S., et. al., 2021). All these phases seem to be very difficult in building relationships with the customer during a pandemic i.e., CRM. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a method for managing an association's relationship with present and likely clients. It uses information examination about a client's set of experiences with an association to further develop the business relationship with clients, unequivocally focusing on client maintenance and in the long run driving each of the business development of the organization. One huge piece of the CRM approach is the systems of CRM that collect information from an extent of different correspondence stations, including an association's site, telephone, email, live visit, displaying materials and even more as of late, virtual entertainment (Rautela, M. A., & Agrawal, M. P.,2020).

The pizza distribution chain Dominos presented a capability in its mobile application that allows clients to put orders by voice; a virtual person named "Dom," who talks with a computer-created voice guides clients through the cycle. Computerizing the method involved with requesting pizza by voice isn't fundamentally an expense-cutting move. Rather, it is expected to increment income by making requesting more advantageous (Rautela, M. A., et.al.,2020). This application help customer as well as Dominos in building healthy relations.

THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL MEDIA TOOLS AND CRM ON CUSTOMER BUYING DECISIONS IN THE RESTAURANTS POST-PANDEMIC

Relationship management, promoting consumer connection & Technology

Relationship management is associated with the notion of establishing long-term relationships between businesses and their consumers to help them create sustainable competitive advantage (Chi, 2021; Kang & Lee, 2021). As a result, maintaining current customers and creating strong connections with them is the most successful approach to lowering marketing costs as compared to constantly pursuing and acquiring new clients (Gashi & Ahmeti, 2021). Moreover, COVID-19 perceptions may affect the convergence of the CRM business strategy, social media sites, and consumer

perceived satisfaction, which might assist service-based enterprises, such as hotels, in promoting consumer connection techniques, brand recognition, informational co-creation, and corporate performance. The elements that operate as drivers of consumer engagement and associated advantages such as good word of mouth and commitment are defined.

Volatile marketplaces and poor brand affinity are important issues in service-based enterprises utilising CRM as a business model (Rahimi, 2017; Saarijärvi, Karjaluoto, & Kuusela, 2013; Sigala, 2018). Customers want to gain greater value from their transactions, which is causing enterprises to face obstacles in extending their client base owing to increase customer retention costs, a rise in budget-focused customers and increased customer requirements (Harrigan et al., 2015). Customers have become savvier in their decision-making as a result of their exposure to numerous social sites like Facebook, TripAdvisor, and others like Expedia.

The availability of money and a technology-based restaurant are the two crucial criteria for expanding market share and earnings. Diners may use social media to share their post-visit experiences/reviews with possible future customers in real time. When it comes to restaurant selection, modern clients are heavily affected by online networking platforms and internet review websites. People may simply and quickly spread word-of-mouth because of the presence of social media. A customer may utilise social media and smart electronic devices and technology to investigate an eating location, examine customer ratings and reviews, and then make a dining selection. Restaurants' mobile apps are also linked to eatery consumer relationship management (CRM) and rewards programs, allowing members' information and interests to be exchanged between consumer mobile phones and eatery apps (Leung & Loo, 2020).

Consumer Behavior Changes Post Pandemic Covid-19

Post-pandemic, customers have developed and adopted various new habits and have started new ways of consuming products and services. As far as eating habits are concerned, most of them preferred to eat at home to ensure hygiene guarantees (Maryati, T. 2020) also the pandemic made the consumer think beyond what they have on their plate and now they are thoughtful about the origin of the food. It has created an atmosphere to rethink the provisions of food and develop buoyant,

sustainable, and egalitarian food systems (Petetin, L. 2020). Now consumers are becoming more knowledgeable about food safety, which they were forced to acquire in the crisis period of lockdown and they have continued practising it post-pandemic also, resulting in a changed perception about the way they purchase foodstuff considering safety first than any other factors. It has been observed by the researcher that the consumers are preferring home cooking followed by online food delivery services and the least preferred is eating out in restaurants (de Souza, et al. 2022). The human routine day-to-day practices have been changed to a great extent (Finger et al., 2021), they are avoiding places which can attract large crowds (Qureshi et al., 2021) the preference was given to isolation, social distancing (Schimit, 2020), and personal hygiene habits, these changes in consumers behaviour has affected directly to the restaurants and outdoor eateries (Daverey and Dutta, 2020) and hence the researcher concluded that there is a definite sign of change in the thought process of the consumers and the society at large, consumers are preferring and getting habitual to online deliveries. Keeping this shift in consumers behaviour, the eateries are also expected to change and transform their traditional business methods to stay in the market to meet the enormous demand and they are forced to evolve innovative ideas, creating differentiation to attract and target the potential market segment (Gavilan et al., 2021). Therefore, hygiene and food safety practices are very important, and the food industry can not ignore them, especially in the present scenario post-pandemic to minimize any risk of food poisoning or related infections. Hence the industry must review and improve its safety procedures, food safety systems and management (ICMSF, 2020). Moreover, the pandemic has taught a lesson to the consumer and the industry that everything is interlinked, and the stakeholders must understand and make the right choices with their correct judgement to fulfil each other's needs (He, Li & Harris, 2012)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is based on a literature review. As a result, we adopted Templier and Paré's (2015) multi-step process to achieve the objectives of the intended research objectives. For the first step, we outlined the research objective of this research: to investigate the use of social media and its influence in restaurants, with a focus on what a pragmatic

implementation of CRM and online tools looks like during a crisis, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, making previously assumed studies more relevant for extreme contexts. Second, we extensively analyzed the available literature and through knowledge of COVID-19 perspectives and the advantages of online media technologies and CRM on consumer purchasing decisions during the pandemic to identify materials that would assist us in analyzing and concluding our theoretical study. The results of the study have been explained in the conclusion section of the manuscript.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this paper was to examine the use and need of social media by consumers as well as restaurant and other food outlets owner during the Covid19. From the various studies that have been conducted in the last few years, it is found that social media plays an important role not even the pandemic but also in regular times as well. Social media is a low-cost platform which provides almost all the necessary information to the consumer. A customer gets information from various sites. Promotional messages may be sent out through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, for example. (Salazar, J. M. R., 2018). Virtual publicity also plays a very effective role in image building, branding, and advertising of many food outlets which plays a significant role in increasing sales during pandemics as well (Fox, G., & Longart, P., 2016). In this study, it is observed that many

famous food sellers like Dominos help customers to choose and smoothly order their choice of food by using a digital application that helps in managing and developing CRM in all ways.

Results also point to the reputation of earned media (word of mouth) spread by other gratified customers who will voluntarily speak in favour of the food outlets. This will help in creating and determining other customers' attitudes; especially if it is coming from people who are considered authorities in social media.

The literature suggests that the perception of the consumer has changed regarding food safety and hygiene. The preference has changed from outdoor dining to cooking confined to secure places like home along with online ordering. In the study, it is also observed that the food industry especially the eateries is modifying their food management systems and hygiene practices to attract customers.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The consequences of this study ought to be seen thinking about their limitation. Qualitative approaches have been reprimanded for restricted example sizes and subjectivity however have been applauded for their luxury and understanding of findings. They are extremely valuable in the exploratory examination. The study is restricted to secondary data only.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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