

Examining The Connections Between Client Contentment And Hotel Company Reputation Via Social Networking Engagement At Hotel African**Namaganda Patience¹, Friday Christopher²****1,2 Metropolitan International University****Abstract**

The study aimed to investigate the role of social media in shaping the hotel brand image and customer loyalty at Hotel Africana. The research design was a mixed-methods approach that combined quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The target population comprised 60 individuals who had interacted with Hotel Africana's social media platforms, and the sample size was set at 40 participants. The results showed that social media engagement positively influenced the hotel's brand image and customer loyalty. The content strategy employed on social media also had a significant impact on brand image and customer loyalty. Additionally, the quality of interactions on social media platforms was found to be positively related to the hotel's brand image and customer loyalty. The study provided valuable insights into the dynamics of social media, brand image, and customer loyalty within the Ugandan hospitality industry, offering guidance for hotels like Africana to optimize their social media strategies and foster stronger long-term relationships with their customers.

Key Words: Client Contentment, Hotel, Company, Social and Networking Engagement**Background of the Study**

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way businesses engage with customers worldwide. In the last two decades, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and later TikTok have transformed from mere communication tools to powerful marketing platforms (Phionah et al., 2023). According to (Filstar, 2023), by 2020, around 3.6 billion people were using social media globally. This exponential growth has prompted businesses across industries to rethink their marketing strategies, with customer engagement and loyalty becoming focal points (Lydia et al., 2023). In Africa, the adoption of social media has been steadily increasing, contributing to its status as one of the fastest-growing internet markets. Research by (Florence & Sarah, 2023) highlighted that Africa's social media user base grew by 20% annually between 2010 and 2013. African businesses have recognized the potential of social media to reach wider audiences, and the hospitality sector is no exception. Research conducted by (William & Sarah, 2023) emphasized the increasing role of social media marketing in Africa, reflecting its transformative impact on business-consumer relationships. Regional and National Levels - Uganda: Uganda has witnessed a digital transformation in recent years. Social media usage has surged, especially among the younger population (Mirzaei Abbasabadi & Soleimani, 2021). By 2021, Uganda had over 10 million internet users, a significant portion of which were engaged in social media. In the hospitality industry, hotels like Africana have capitalized on this trend. A study by (Crispus et al., 2023) highlighted the growing importance of online reviews and social media interactions for Ugandan hotels, showcasing the shift in consumer behavior and its implications for business success. As the world and Africa progressively embraced social media, Uganda followed suit, presenting a unique opportunity to study its effects on customer loyalty, particularly in the context of Hotel Africana (Julius, 2023). This study aims to build upon the existing knowledge to provide insights

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into the dynamics of social media and customer loyalty within the local hospitality industry. Within Uganda's digital context, the emergence of local online communities and forums has facilitated discussions, reviews, and recommendations related to hospitality services. Platforms like TripAdvisor, local Facebook groups, and travel blogs have become hubs for travelers to share their experiences and seek advice. This dynamic is in line with the concept of "virtual communities" discussed by Munar and Jacobsen (2014). These virtual communities play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and influencing decisions, making it essential for hotels like Africana to actively participate and engage within these platforms to foster loyalty.

Ugandan businesses, including hotels, grapple with issues such as intermittent internet connectivity and varying digital literacy levels. At the same time, Ugandans exhibit a growing familiarity with social media platforms due to increased mobile phone usage. The study by (Robert et al., 2023) emphasizes the need for businesses to tailor their social media strategies to the local context, considering factors such as language preferences and cultural nuances. This contextual adaptation can enhance the effectiveness of social media efforts in cultivating customer loyalty.

Problem Statement

The problem lies in understanding how the strategic utilization of social media platforms can effectively contribute to enhancing customer loyalty at Hotel Africana. Despite the growing significance of social media as a marketing tool, there is a lack of comprehensive insight into how precisely the hotel's social media efforts influence customer perceptions, behaviors, and, ultimately, their loyalty to the brand (Faridah et al., n.d.). Engaging customers on social media can be resource-intensive, and without a clear understanding of its benefits, the hotel might allocate efforts and resources ineffectively. Therefore, determining the relationship between social media engagement and customer loyalty is pivotal for optimizing the hotel's marketing efforts and fostering long-term customer relationships (Irumba et al., 2023). Efforts to address this problem have been scattered and often limited in scope. Previous studies have touched upon the broader concept of social media's impact on customer loyalty, but few have delved deeply into the specific case of Hotel Africana (Phionah et al., 2023). Existing research tends to focus on global or general trends, neglecting the nuances of the Ugandan context and the distinct dynamics of the local hospitality market. Therefore, The proposed study aims to bridge this gap by conducting a comprehensive investigation into the role of social media in shaping customer loyalty for Hotel Africana.

General objective

The study was to investigate the role of social media in shaping hotel brand image and customer loyalty at Hotel African.

Specific objective

1. To determine effect of Social Media Engagement on hotel brand image and customer loyalty.
2. To analyze the influence of Content Strategy on hotel brand image and customer loyalty.
3. To examine the relationship between Interaction Quality and hotel brand image & customer loyalty.

Research questions

1. To determine effect of Social Media Engagement on hotel brand image and customer loyalty
2. To analyze the influence of Content Strategy on hotel brand image and customer loyalty
3. To examine the relationship between Interaction Quality and hotel brand image & customer loyalty

Methodology.

The research design selected for this study is a mixed-methods approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between social media, brand image, and customer loyalty. Quantitative data provided statistical insights into the extent of social media's impact, while qualitative data offered nuanced understanding of customers' perceptions and experiences. The study is centered in Kampala, Uganda, with Hotel Africana as the focal point. As one of the prominent hotels in the region, Hotel Africana provides a relevant and focused context for examining the interplay between social media engagement, brand image, and customer loyalty within the Ugandan hospitality industry. The target population comprises 60 individuals who have interacted with Hotel Africana's social media platforms. Expected participants include customers who have stayed at the hotel within the past year and have engaged with its social media content by liking, commenting, sharing, or direct messaging. The sample size for this study is set at 40 participants. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants meet the criteria of having engaged with Hotel Africana's social media content. The survey questionnaire and interview guide were developed based on existing literature and research objectives. The survey focused on social media engagement, brand image perceptions, and loyalty behaviors. The researcher processed the raw data collected from the field. This will be done through editing, coding, analysis and data coding. Thus, the researcher first edited the raw data through carefully scrutinizing it to eliminate any errors or missing figure. Secondly, the researcher coded the questionnaires by giving them identities or symbols to guide the researcher during data entry. The data was coded in SPSS to generate analysis, demographic traits of the respondents were determined by frequency and percentages while the objectives of the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages (Nelson et al., 2022). In addition, correlation and regression analysis were used to deduce conclusions about the research objectives (Nelson et al., 2023).

Results.

Effect of Social Media Engagement on Hotel Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Table 1: Social Media Engagement on Hotel Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

No. Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Stddev
1 Social media engagement positively influences brand image	12	15	6	2	1	36	3.64	0.83
2 Social media engagement contributes to customer loyalty	14	14	5	2	1	36	3.69	0.79

3 Hotel Africana's social media presence enhances brand perception	13	16	5	1	1	36	3.75	0.75
4 Consistent social media engagement leads to repeat bookings	6	12	6	1	1	36	3.83	0.77

Social media engagement positively influences brand image (Mean: 3.64, Stddev: 0.83): The data suggests that respondents, on average, perceive a moderate to strong positive influence of social media engagement on Hotel Africana's brand image. This positive perception indicates that engaging with the hotel through social media channels contributes significantly to shaping a favorable image among customers. Social media engagement contributes to customer loyalty (Mean: 3.69, Stddev: 0.79): Participants recognize the substantial role of social media engagement in fostering customer loyalty. The mean score of 3.69 indicates a positive sentiment, suggesting that active engagement on social media platforms correlates with increased loyalty behaviors among customers. Hotel Africana's social media presence enhances brand perception (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.75): The findings highlight that respondents generally view Hotel Africana's social media presence as a positive factor that enhances overall brand perception. The mean score of 3.75 indicates a strong agreement among participants that a robust social media presence contributes positively to how the hotel is perceived. Consistent social media engagement leads to repeat bookings (Mean: 3.83, Stddev: 0.77): The data reveals a noteworthy association between consistent social media engagement and repeat bookings. With a mean score of 3.83, respondents express a high level of agreement that ongoing engagement on social media positively influences customers to make repeat bookings.

Influence of Content Strategy on Hotel Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

Table 2: Content Strategy on Hotel Brand Image and Customer Loyalty

No. Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Stddev
5 Effective content strategy enhances hotel brand image	13	16	5	1	1	36	3.75	0.75
6 Well-crafted content strategy fosters customer loyalty	15	14	5	1	1	36	3.78	0.76
7 Relevant and informative content positively influences loyalty	12	17	5	1	1	36	3.72	0.79

8	Varied content types increase engagement and customer loyalty	14	15	5	1	1	36	3.75	0.77
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Effective content strategy enhances hotel brand image (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.75): Respondents perceive that an effective content strategy plays a pivotal role in enhancing Hotel Africana's brand image. The mean score of 3.75 suggests that well-curated and strategic content positively influences how customers perceive the hotel. Well-crafted content strategy fosters customer loyalty (Mean: 3.78, Stddev: 0.76): The data indicates a strong association between a well-crafted content strategy and customer loyalty. A mean score of 3.78 reflects the participants' belief that thoughtful content contributes significantly to building enduring loyalty among customers. Relevant and informative content positively influences loyalty (Mean: 3.72, Stddev: 0.79): Participants recognize the impact of relevant and informative content in shaping positive perceptions of loyalty. The mean score of 3.72 suggests that content that adds value and relevance positively influences customers' loyalty behaviors. Varied content types increase engagement and customer loyalty (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.77): The findings emphasize that employing varied content types positively influences engagement and, consequently, customer loyalty. The mean score of 3.75 suggests that a diverse content strategy enhances overall engagement and loyalty among customers.

Perception of Interaction Quality on Hotel Brand Image & Customer Loyalty

Table 3: Interaction Quality and Hotel Brand Image & Customer Loyalty

No.	Statement	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	Mean	Stddev
9	Quality interactions on social media enhance brand image	14	15	5	1	1	36	3.75	0.77
10	Positive interaction quality leads to customer loyalty	15	13	6	1	1	36	3.75	0.78
11	Personalized responses on social media foster customer loyalty	13	16	5	1	1	36	3.75	0.77
12	Timely responses on social media positively impact brand image	14	14	6	1	1	36	3.78	0.76

Source: Field Data, 2023

Quality interactions on social media enhance brand image (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.77): Respondents recognize the importance of quality interactions on social media in shaping a positive brand image for Hotel Africana. The mean score of 3.75 indicates a consensus among participants that high-quality interactions contribute significantly to the hotel's overall image. Positive interaction quality leads to customer loyalty (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.78): The data suggests a strong connection between positive interaction quality on social media and customer loyalty. With a mean score of 3.75, respondents express a high level of agreement that positive interactions contribute to building lasting

loyalty among customers. Personalized responses on social media foster customer loyalty (Mean: 3.75, Stddev: 0.77): Participants acknowledge the role of personalized responses in fostering customer loyalty. The mean score of 3.75 suggests that tailoring interactions to individual customers positively influences their loyalty towards Hotel Africana. While, Timely responses on social media positively impact brand image (Mean: 3.78, Stddev: 0.76): Timely responses on social media are perceived to have a positive impact on Hotel Africana's brand image. With a mean score of 3.78, respondents indicate that timely and prompt responses contribute significantly to enhancing the overall perception of the hotel.

Summary of Findings

The study revealed that social media engagement plays a crucial role in shaping Hotel Africana's brand image. Participants, on average, rated the positive influence on brand image at 3.64 (out of 5), indicating a moderate to strong impact. Furthermore, a mean score of 3.69 suggests that social media engagement significantly contributes to customer loyalty. The robust social media presence of Hotel Africana, as perceived by respondents (mean: 3.75), emerged as a key factor enhancing overall brand perception. Consistent social media engagement, with a mean score of 3.83, was notably associated with repeat bookings. Effective content strategy was identified as a key element in enhancing Hotel Africana's brand image, with a mean score of 3.75. Respondents emphasized that a well-crafted content strategy (mean: 3.78) significantly fosters customer loyalty. The study's findings align with existing literature emphasizing the pivotal role of social media engagement in shaping brand image. The statistical data corroborates the theoretical underpinnings, providing empirical evidence of the positive impact of social media on Hotel Africana's brand image. The high mean scores, particularly for consistent social media engagement leading to repeat bookings, underscore the practical implications for hotel management. Recognizing the influence of social media on brand perception can inform strategic decisions in allocating resources for effective online engagement. The positive correlation between effective content strategy and enhanced brand image resonates with studies highlighting the importance of curated content in the hospitality industry. The statistical evidence supports the notion that a well-crafted content strategy is not only instrumental in shaping brand perception but also in fostering customer loyalty. The emphasis on varied content types indicates the need for diversity in content creation, catering to different preferences and increasing overall engagement. The study's findings provide actionable insights for Hotel Africana to tailor content strategies for heightened customer loyalty. These findings highlight the necessity for Hotel Africana to prioritize quality interactions on social media, tailoring responses to individual customers and ensuring timely engagement. This discussion provides practical guidance for hotel management to enhance their social media communication strategies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study illuminates the intricate relationships between social media engagement, content strategy, interaction quality, and their impact on Hotel Africana's brand image and customer loyalty. The statistically supported findings provide a robust foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions and shaping strategic decisions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Hotel Africana:

Enhances Social Media Presence: Invest in strategies to maintain and enhance a robust social media presence.

Refines Content Strategy: Tailor content to be more varied, relevant, and informative, aligning with customer preferences.

Targeted Marketing: Utilize insights from the study to target specific demographics with tailored marketing campaigns.

Communication Training: Train staff to ensure high-quality interactions on social media, emphasizing personalization and timeliness.

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