

Brand Awareness of Travel Agents in Hospitality Industry- An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: Brand awareness is the level of consumer consciousness of a company. It measures a potential customer's ability to not only recognize a brand image, but to also associate it with a certain company's product or service. With the variety of options in Hospitality Industry, having a differentiated message and an audience that can distinguish a company's brand from its competitors is crucial. It can mean the difference between success and failure for a company. Businesses with strong branding are viewed as accepted by the market. Therefore, they are trusted more by consumers who are looking to purchase a new product.

This Research gives a comprehensive exploratory analysis regarding the Brand awareness of Hospitality industry with special reference to FabHotels in Travelling Agents Sales (TA sales) for expansion in the market. The result of the study may help hospitality industry to acquire more TAs and also provide base for companies to gear up to the consumer's demand and expectations.

Keywords: *Brand Awareness, Hospitality Industry, Travel Agents*

INTRODUCTION

Brand awareness is best spread through both inbound and outbound marketing efforts. When competition in an industry is high, brand awareness can be one of a business's greatest assets. Entire marketing campaigns can be constructed around promoting awareness of the brand. Spreading brand awareness is especially important during a company's first few years, when they are trying to make a name for themselves. When consumers are aware of the product a company offers, they will more likely go straight to that company if they need that product, instead of researching other places that they can acquire that product.

Hospitality: The concepts of hospitality is known since ancient times, the meaning of the term hospitality refers to welcome, warmth, kindness and generosity; in the ancient times, people considered hospitality to be very significant for their religious well being. Religion is regarded to be the primary encouraging strength in the concept of hospitality. In historic as well as in ancient times, priests, missionaries and pilgrims formed the large part of the travelling public, their journeys included travelling to religious, holy places, and temples that had a governing position in their religion; besides priests and pilgrims, the other people who were engaged into travelling were the military traveller or for the purpose of diplomacy or political. People travel to religious places, historical places, tourist and local attractions for some reason or for vacation, leisure, business and recreational activities. When people travel, they require accommodation and hospitality, therefore, hotels, resorts, motels or houses of friends and relatives in different areas were considered to be the places where people reside overnight while travelling or visiting. The main purpose of this research paper is to understand the meaning and significance of hospitality management, the main areas that have been taken into account are characteristics of the hospitality industry, hospitality industry in India, eco-friendly practices in hospitality management, skills required for satisfactory hospitality management, and role of hospitality industry in tourism.

Hospitality Industry in India : Hospitality business within the Asian country offers a comprehensive approach to those people UN agency shall create a career during this field; a private is ready to mass data of all the area units and fields that are a part of the cordial reception business. There are unit various fields during this business, like introduction to the lodging business, human resources management structure, facilities management, cordial reception law, employment law, food sanitation, food services operation, price management, career development, structure administration, money and social control accounting, money management and operations and strategic management area unit the important areas that come back beneath cordial reception business.

In India, there has been development within the fields of education, technology and industrialization; with these developments, there has been progress within the space of cordial reception management, cordial reception business has emerged into a replacement structure and their main purpose began to amass transformation from community to profitable benefits. The most objective of cordial reception business is to create accessible all the adequate facilities to pilgrims, scholars, adventurers and merchants.

There are characteristics of the welcome business, these are intangibleness, inseparability, variability or heterogeneousness, decease ability, mounted provide, high in operation prices and seasonality as to render adequate performance in welcome management, there are bound skills that human resources ought to possess; these are skill, reasoning, downside resolution and higher cognitive process, sturdy work ethics, independence and initiative, presentation skills and leadership. These skills not solely cause adequate performance of the manpower within the welcome business, however cause client satisfaction in addition, that is that the most essential demand. If any of those skills are lacking and also the customers don't feel glad with the service, then they'll ne'er build a visit thereto place in future, hence, this results in decline within the goodwill of the place or edifice. The foremost necessary demand on the part of the manpower ought to be politeness and respectful communication.

NATURE OF THE WORK

Market Mapping and targeting the customers who are linked with the 3 star segment (i.e, collection of primary data and working on the same to create more business).

Understanding the requirements to discuss with the assigned managers and approaching them accordingly.

Following are the set of questions asked in order to get responses for the following:

- ✓ Do they work on domestic packages or international packages?
- ✓ In which segment of hotel does they deal in.
- ✓ Which part of India does he get major query in?
- ✓ Currently which hotel chain they are using?
- ✓ Do they get direct customer booking or get from travel desk?

This study was conducted to evaluate the brand awareness and brand promotion adopted by FabHotel.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Customer Satisfaction: Vavra, T.G. (1997) in his book "Improving your measurement of customer satisfaction" revealed some strategies those helped in measuring the customer satisfaction in a better way in Hospitality organizations. The author emphasized that there are five precautions that any researcher should keep in mind if he/she want to measure the customer satisfaction. The first task is to do a correct sampling i.e. the selection of the right population; correct sampling is followed by the construction of a right questionnaire, then taking a right interview in a right way, doing a correct data analysis with right statistical tools and than putting right quality action plan. Smith, A.K. et al (1999) in their paper "A model of customer satisfaction with service encounters involving failure and recovery"

did a survey with the help of a mix –design model. The research was carried away on the belief that customers strongly 32 showed their displeasure if there is a service failure, so it was suggested by the authors that organizations must reacts with better service –recovery strategies to counter check the customer's dissatisfaction.

Jay Kandampully and Dwi Suhartanto (2000) in their research paper "Consumers loyalty in the Hotel industry" stated that the objectives of the study was to find the elements those influenced the positioning of Hotel industry and affected the satisfaction level of consumers .The study helped researchers to understand the relationships among, brand image, customer satisfaction and loyalty of customers towards hotel services. Researchers advocated that competition in the industry has provided more choices, increased level of quality of services, and more value of money to consumers.

Holjevac, I.A. et al (2000) in their paper "Customer satisfaction measurement in Hotel industry: Content analysis study." found that to provide and maintain customers satisfaction in Hotel industry was the biggest challenge for managers. The study was conducted in 25 hotels in Opatija, in which researcher analyzed the Guests Comments Cards of Hotels and customers satisfaction management schemes run by Hotels. Researcher used an approach which was given by Horeshell in 1988, and was named as Applied Content Analysis. The researcher stated that though there were other tools present in the Hotels those might have helped in assessing the customer satisfaction but Guests Comment Cards were more appropriate for this purpose because they were in small size and could be easily studied. Besides it they were easy to understand because they were simple.

Willard Hom (2000) in his research paper "An overview of customer satisfaction models" classified and studied two models of customer's satisfaction. These models considered customer satisfaction variables, as the construct of models and in this way author has theorized the elements of customer's satisfaction. Author has provided these models of customer satisfactions from the point of view of marketing research. **Silvia Fugini and Paolo Giudici (2002)** in their research paper "Statistical model for customer satisfaction data measuring risks with ordinal variables" analyzed the various ways to collect the data which could be used to measure the satisfaction of consumers. Author discussed and proposed the various methodologies those were based on graphical model and data related with customers and its statistical analysis. Study further revealed two methods which can be used to analyze the data related with consumer's satisfaction. Authors recommended the internet for collection of consumer's satisfaction data. This method made possible the monitoring of visitors on internet.

Peyton, R.M. et al (2003) in their paper "Theories of customer satisfaction" did an intensive literature review on different theories of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The paper discussed the four theories. The first theory analyzed was Consistency theory which included Assimilation theory, Negative theory, Assimilation contrast theory, and Contrast theory. The paper not only provided a theoretical base to the research but elaborated the important factors of most accepted models of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Malthouse, E.C. et al (2003) in their research paper "Customer Satisfaction across Organizational Units" analyzed the satisfaction level of consumers throughout all the units of organization. The authors analyzed and described the models of customer satisfaction for investigating the relations of satisfaction with particular attributes of products and services. The researchers investigated that, whether the factors influencing the satisfaction in totality are same or differ in different departments/units of organization. Authors highlighted the additional variables those were responsible for this variation.

Service Quality: Rizaldi and Vijay (2006) in their research paper "Analysis of Five SERVQUAL Dimensions through Disconfirmation Theory" studied the dimensions of SERVQUAL scales. The dimensions were analyzed with the help of disconfirmation theory. Authors used this theory to elaborate the quality of services and satisfaction which has been perceived by the consumers. **Gupta Sachin et al (2007)** in their research paper "Guest Satisfaction and Restaurant Performance" collected the data from a restaurant chain which has a national presence and constructed a series of mathematical models .These models could predict how the customers satisfaction level will bring them back to the restaurants. The researchers designed two models for their study. The first model found the relationship of customer satisfaction with dining experience with respect to 21 different attributes. **Rooma (2007)** in her research

paper "Developing a Service Quality Questionnaire for the Hotel Industry in Mauritius" advocated that evaluation of customer satisfaction is very important for all organization in service sector so that they can show the better performance in cut throat competitive world. The author argued about the applicability of SERVQUAL dimensions in Hotel industry i.e. whether the present five dimensions are sufficient to measure the quality in Hotel Industry or not, and in response of it author suggested some more dimensions, those were related with industry. The researcher carried his study in a tourist village in an Island and the respondents were interviewed with open ended questions. They were asked about their expectations and perception about the services offered at Island hotels.

Brand Management in Hotel Industry: **Salver Jessica (2009)** in her book "Brand Management in the Hotel Industry and its Potential for Achieving Customer Loyalty" found the correlation in between customer loyalty and brand name. To investigate and analyze the brand management practices and to implement these concepts in the services of Hotels was the core objective of 38 this research. The author selected this particular topic because brand management is the most discussed and researched topic in Hospitality industry. The objective of this study was to find out a link in between these two management concepts and to find out the positive aspects of Hotel services branding on consumers loyalty.

Gopal V.V. (2010) in his paper "CRM in Travel and Tourism - Concepts and Cases" explained the evolution and growth of Customer Relationship Management practices in Hotel and Aviation industry. The author revealed that Travel and Tourism industry is intensively training their employees with CRM practices so that they can tap maximum number of customers. The paper also covered the significance of technology in serving the customers. Technology can assist customers in providing the quality information's. Authors used a methodological framework to analyze the guests and hotel relationship and profile of hotel guests, statistical tools like moving average and trend analysis were used for analyzing the data which was collected through schedules. Secondary data was taken from published reports of government and non government bodies. The author laid stress on appealing body language of employees such as good dressing sense, pleasing and smiling personality and face expressions .The author found that Hotel industry was lacking in quality software's, product database and effective tracking systems. The study will facilitate the managers to find appropriate and effective Customer Relationship Management techniques which will help the organizations to keep their customers satisfied and happy.

Roya Ranimi (2010) in her research paper "Feasibility Study of Customer Relationship Management Application in Hotel Industry" did a feasibility study on Customer's Relationship Management in Hotel Industry and wrote and presented a thesis. The author selected this problem for study because of increasing privatization and globalization, higher attrition rate of employees, increasing cost of hiring and ever increasing customer's expectations in Hotel industry. Customer Relationship Management plays a crucial role in present competitive scenario.

Singh Sachid Nand (2011) in his research paper "Geography of Tourism and Recreation" wrote that if a tourist finds that the people in Hospitality organization are very charming and hospitable, he/she tended to develop a closer contact and even mutual understanding with such organization. Further this will enhance the image as well as the intensity of attractiveness of tourism companies, because it affects the consumers psychologically and give a homely touch to them. So to satisfy tourists, the strongest means of publicity was the cordial and hospitable attitude of the people. He further stated that a tourist will develop an image of a particular hospitality organization after coming in contact with a very limited number of people of that organization.

Enen (2011) in her article "The game has changed" stressed that customers were willing to develop relations with Hospitality organizations. The author believed that old beliefs regarding customers satisfaction those brought success for organization may not be successful in future. Besides goods and services, the environment now is expecting more from Hospitality organizations. People are going to be very important for Hospitality industry, these may be customers, employees, and sales partners and they all are expecting long term strong relations with Hospitality organizations. Customers are looking for organizations on which they can trust and those take care of their tastes and preferences and values. Organizations must not see their customers as a source of profit instead they should involve them in their

values and decisions. Author found that customers are cautious about their relationship with organizations and new strategies has to be developed to increase the loyalty of consumers towards Hospitality services.

Simons Tony (2012) in his book “The integrity dividend” described about his study which was conducted on 6800 employees in 76 Holiday Inns. He found a significant positive relation in between the profits of hotels and behavioral integrity of each hotel. The findings revealed that managers those scored highest integrity from their employees also were found to earn the higher profits, which positively affected the quality of services and enhanced the retention of customers. Author further found that employees those believed that their managers kept their words were found to be more committed to the organization businesses, which led to low employee attrition rate and quality customer services and ultimately resulted in increased profits. **Ellen Day and Melvin R. Crask (2000)** in their research paper “Value Assessment: The Antecedent of Customer Satisfaction” suggested that if satisfaction of customers is the motive then managers must focus on the factors those influenced the customer satisfaction. The objective of this research paper was 1. To review the literature and summarizing and finding the gaps found in previous researches. 2. To analyze the value assessment process with respect to perceived risk. 3. To give suggestions for future research. The authors claimed to be the first those have found out a link in between value and dissatisfactions. As per authors consumers had the following perception regarding value products. (1) A product must perform the desired function. (2) There must not any physical harm or injury ensuing from the use of product (3) Product must be recommended and approved from others (4) Achieving a sense of self-efficacy.

Dubé Laurette and Leo M Renganathan (2011) in their paper “Creating visible customer value” highlighted that for inducing loyalty in the customers, managers should provide value to their guests while they stayed in their Hotels, and it can be done by providing the excellent services to these customers. The authors in their study found out the factors those were perceived by the guests positively and those have significantly influenced them. Managers disclosed and discussed these factors while they elaborated their business strategies and success stories in media or business meets. **Jonathan Lee et al (2006)** in their research paper “Incorporating Word-of-mouth Effects in Estimating Customer Lifetime Value” researched on customer life time value (CLV) and word of mouth. The rationale behind the research was that there is a risk while customer values and marketing effects are measured with respect to finance which is contributed directly. The risk involved is that it may mislead marketing managers. The study found the influence of word of mouth in estimating customer’s life time value. The researcher had a sample size of 1493 customers and used a measuring scale of 10 points. The variables included level of overall customer’s satisfaction and willingness to recommend (word of mouth).

Nelson Tsang and Hailin Qu (2000) in their research paper “Service quality in China’s Hotel Industry: A perspective from Tourists and Hotel managers” discussed the perception of international guests as well as Hotel management towards the quality of services provided in Chinese Hotel industry. The research methodology consisted of a sample size of 270 international tourists and 90 Chinese hotel managers. The study was carried in Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou. Researchers set the following objectives of study. 1. To analyze the perception and expectations of international tourists, regarding the service quality and the products of Chinese Hotel industry. 2. To analyze the perception and expectations of Hotel managers regarding the service quality and the products of Chinese Hotel industry. 3. To find out the gaps in between perceptions of Hotel managers and international tourists, regarding products and services provided in Chinese Hotel industry. The study revealed that, “The gaps between tourists and Hotel management could be bridged. **Pei Mey Lau et al (2005)** in their research paper “Service Quality: A Study of the Luxury Hotels in Malaysia” investigated about the perception of customers of Hotels regarding quality of services. Researchers found that consumer’s perception came out to be lower than expectations and a significant gap was found in between the two. The research was carried in Malaysia in a five star Hotel of “Klag valley”.

Halil Nadiri and Hussain Kashif (2005) in their research paper, “Diagnosing the Zone of Tolerance for Hotel Services”, Managing Service Quality, researched the zone of tolerance of customers and found the level of satisfaction of customers. The study was carried in Hotels in North Cyprus. Researchers

selected four, five star and resorts hotels for their study. The study revealed that customers of these Hotels evaluated the quality of services on the basis of tangibles and intangibles dimensions. The researcher further found that Zone of Tolerance was very small among the Hotel customers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This Research uses exploratory study and Questionnaire method. The use of different methods allowed gathering different kinds of data, which provides different viewpoints to address different research objectives.

A questionnaire has been used to collect primary data and 60 respondents were used in the final analysis of objectives. Questionnaire was developed through a review of the previous studies.

The questionnaire was circulated among a sample size of 60 people and feedbacks were taken and then, the questionnaire was finalized after improving the contents of the questions.

SOURCE OF DATA

Primary Source

Primary source of collection of data will be purely survey method where retail shopkeeper will be given a set of questionnaires and then they have to respond without any biasness.

Secondary Source

The secondary source for me was Literature review, Reviews of different authors, different research papers, journals, websites, and blogs.

SAMPLING

The sample for survey would be taken on the following basis.

Sample frame: Geographic, Name, age, specific population of Delhi NCR.

Sample unit: Travelling agents, corporate office.

Sample size: 60 respondents.

Time frame: 1 Month

Sampling method: *Judgmental sampling*, also called *purposive sampling* or *authoritative sampling*

OBJECTIVES

Main objective of the research are as follows:

- **Primary objective**

The main purpose of this was to understand the brand awareness level and expectations of travelling agent. In order to do so the target market had to be surveyed thoroughly so as to understand what exactly the travelling agents is looking for in the company that will satisfy travelling agent requirements.

- **Secondary objective**

- To study the Hospitality Industry
- To understand the awareness level and perception of travelling agent
- To recognize the expectations of travelling agent at Delhi NCR
- To analyse the client acquisition of FabHotel.

DATA ANALYSIS

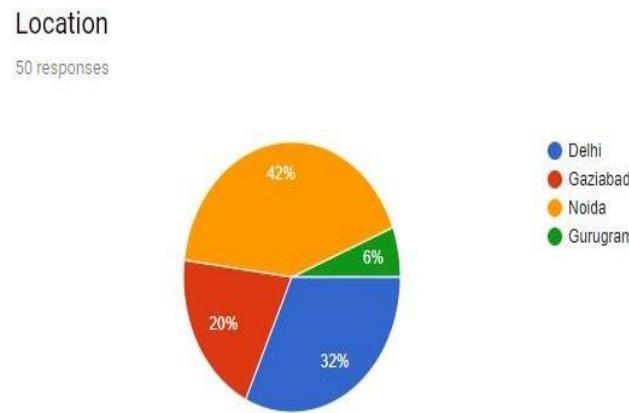


Figure 1

Interpretation: Highest respondents were from Noida due to proximity of the researcher. The results may be more appropriate for Noida and its close by areas.

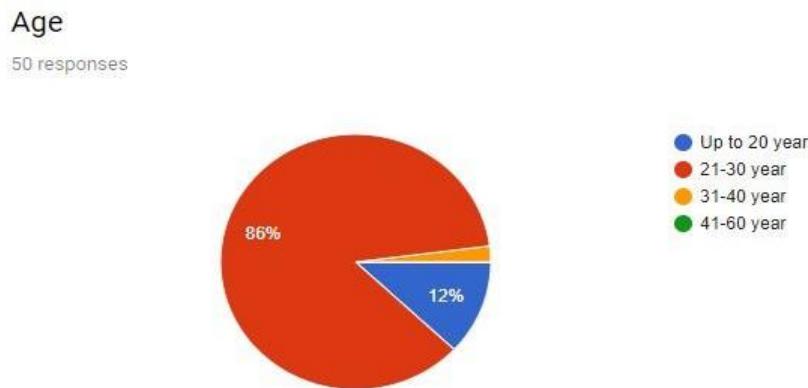


Figure 2

Interpretation: High percent of respondents fall in the age group of 21 to 30. This is due to the reason that majority of the Travel agents are of this age group.

Which of the following Brands have you heard of?

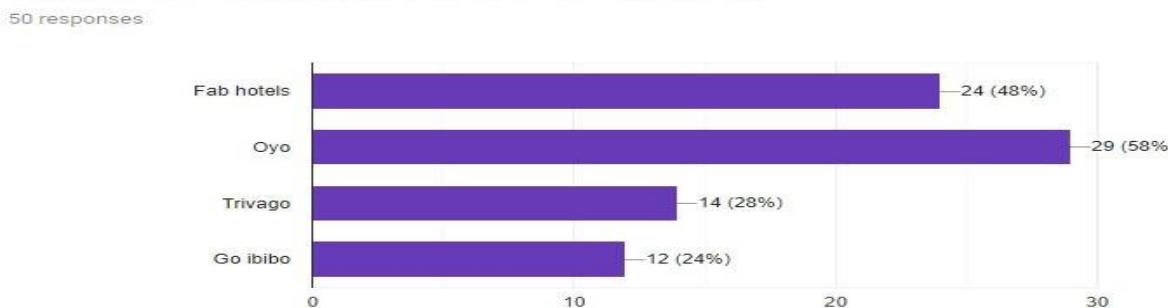


Figure 3

Interpretation: Oyo is having more brand awareness than any other due to its huge investment on advertisements and heavy publicity.

How familiar are you with our brand (FabHotel) ?

50 responses

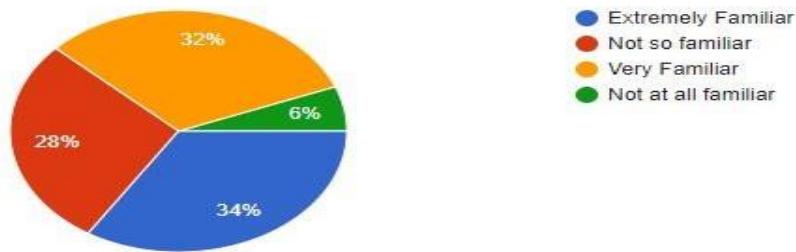


Figure 4

Interpretation: Nearly 60 percent of the respondents are in the range of familiar to not so familiar. This reflects the scope of improvement in the policies and strategies of fab Hotels for Travel Agents.

Have you ever visited the FabHotel?

49 responses

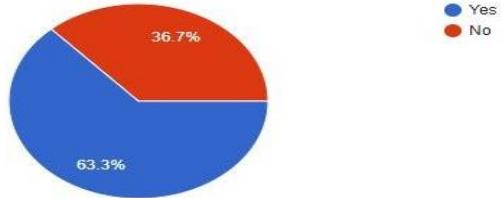


Figure 5

Interpretation: Out of all respondents 63% of them visited Fab Hotels at least once and used the services of Fab Hotels. The exposure and experience of Travel agents about Hotel Services is not extremely good.

Which brand is best service provider ?

50 responses

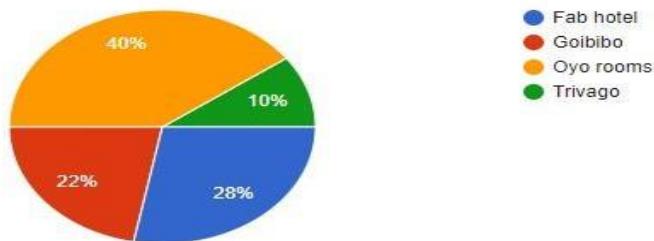


Figure 6

Interpretation: Approx 28% respondents think that FabHotels is a best service provider and 40% respondents think that Oyo rooms give best service provider. Due to high cost of FabHotels this percentage is little lower for FabHotels.

How would you describe your overall opinion of our brand ?

50 responses



Figure 7

Interpretation: Out of those who have experienced Fab Hotel, 80% of all respondents describe their opinion as favourable.

How often do you go on holidays lasting at least 5 days?

48 responses



Figure 8

Interpretation: Maximum percent of all respondents go on holiday at least 5 days every few year or several times a year. The company is not tapping or encouraging the prospective customers with special schemes.

Are you aware of the Discounts or offers provided by the hotel?

50 responses

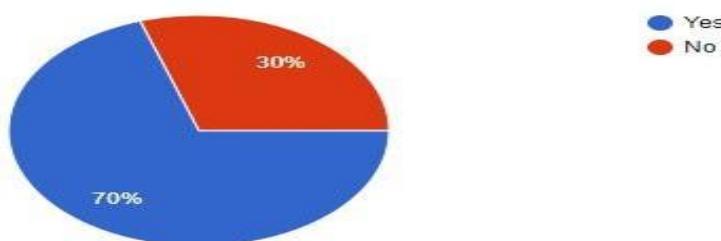


Figure 9

Interpretation: 70% of respondents are aware of discounts and offers provided by the FabHotel at different- different online portal.

Your opinion towards Quality of fabhotels compared to other Hotels:

50 responses



Figure 10

Interpretation: Approx 76% respondents are satisfied with the quality of FabHotels compared to other hotels, and 22% are little satisfied or moderate.

Are you satisfied with the services of FabHotels?

50 responses

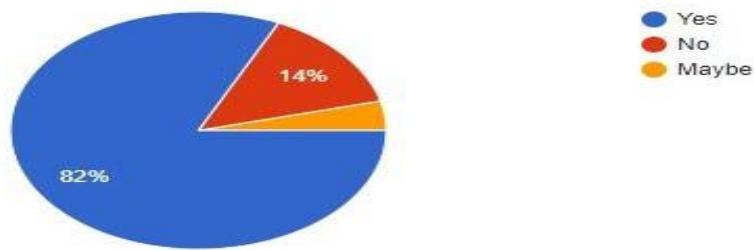


Figure 11

Interpretation: Around 82% are satisfied with services of Fabhotels which is the one of the best USP of this hospitality company.

Will you prefer FabHotels for conferences or corporate meetings?

50 responses

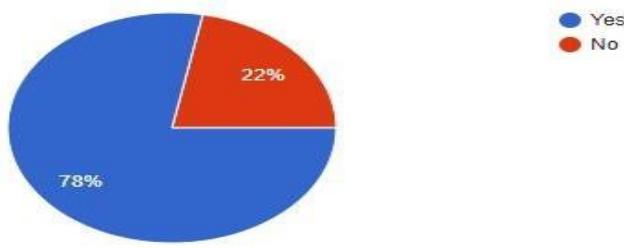


Figure 12

Interpretation: Around 78% respondents prefer Fabhotels for conferences or corporate meetings. It's still facing a raising competition from OYO and ITC.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The data collected by the Google questionnaire which was shared with 60 respondents who belong to Delhi NCR. Out of 60 responses 42% respondent belong to Noida, 6% belong to Gurugram, 20% belongs to Ghaziabad and 32% belongs to Delhi. Below mentioned are the findings based on the analysis:

1. The age limit of respondent is mostly 21 to 30 years. More than 45% are aware of FabHotels as a trusted brand.
2. Out of 60 response 63 % of them visited FabHotels atleast once and 66% of them are familiar with FabHotels.
3. Out of 60 response 28% thinks that FabHotels is best service provider
4. 82% of respondent's opinion is that FabHotels are favorable brand in hospitality
5. Around 78% respondents prefer FabHotels for conferences or corporate meetings other than Oyo hotels or ITC

CONCLUSION

FabHotels is one of the India's most trusted brands which is famous with the tag of "Budget Hotels". Due to which it gave headache to many big brands hospitality sector with the standard influences. The finding shows that there are many travelling perception which changes the decision of customers when they reach to hotels so FabHotels have to focus on travelling agent and give them many schemes to influence travelling agents to give FabHotels service in place of other brands. In this study large no of Agent and customer give negative feedback regarding policy of expiry pickup. While doing this study retailers are most interested to invest in FabHotels and hence research is working effectively and in Delhi NCR.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Most of the travelling agent face problem that schemes is not available.
- Increase the profit margin to travelling agents.
- They can increase their supply chain so that product quality increases.
- FabHotels should work on its marketing strategies and manpower to give competition to other brands.
- FabHotels have to make new strategy to regain its position.

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