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Study of hospitality Domain's Online presence and the feasibility of taking a new business online found through primary research and supported through secondary research

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Abstract

As per a report by IBEF, the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP at Real 2019 prices stood at US\$268.29 billion, and is forecasted to grow to US\$512.00 billion in the year 2029. This study would focus on the accommodation and catering segment of tourism and hospitality. The emerging tourism and hospitality segments cover the areas in Rural, Adventure, Medical, Heritage, Luxury, Pilgrimage and Eco-Tourism. Foreign tourist arrivals (FTAs) in India stood at 10.89 million in the year 2019, with a growth rate of 3.20% year-on-year. Contrary to the 2019 figures, FTAs in India in 2020 stood at 2.46 million. The FTA growth in the year 2019 was seen due to flexible government policies, developed rail and road infrastructure, and ease in availability of e-tourist visas to foreign tourists. While during 2019, foreign exchange earnings from tourism in India stood at US\$ 29.96 billion, the year 2020 recorded a sharp fall with US\$ 6.15 billion foreign exchange earnings from tourism due to COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many changes, one of the major being staying isolated at home as compared to pre COVID times of endless interactions and meetings with friends and family. This study wants to know whether their consumption level is the same as before, are they consuming the same offerings or are they ordering at home. Around how many times do they order online, so that hotels and restaurants can get accustomed to the shift in consumer demand and plan their digital framework in accordance? This study is a descriptive research conducted through a survey based on self-designed, structured questionnaires on various aspects of website traffic (audience). A sample size of 400 has been selected through non-probability, convenient sampling (people in contact list and their relatives/ friends, spread all across India, somewhat similar to snowball sampling but distributed across India).

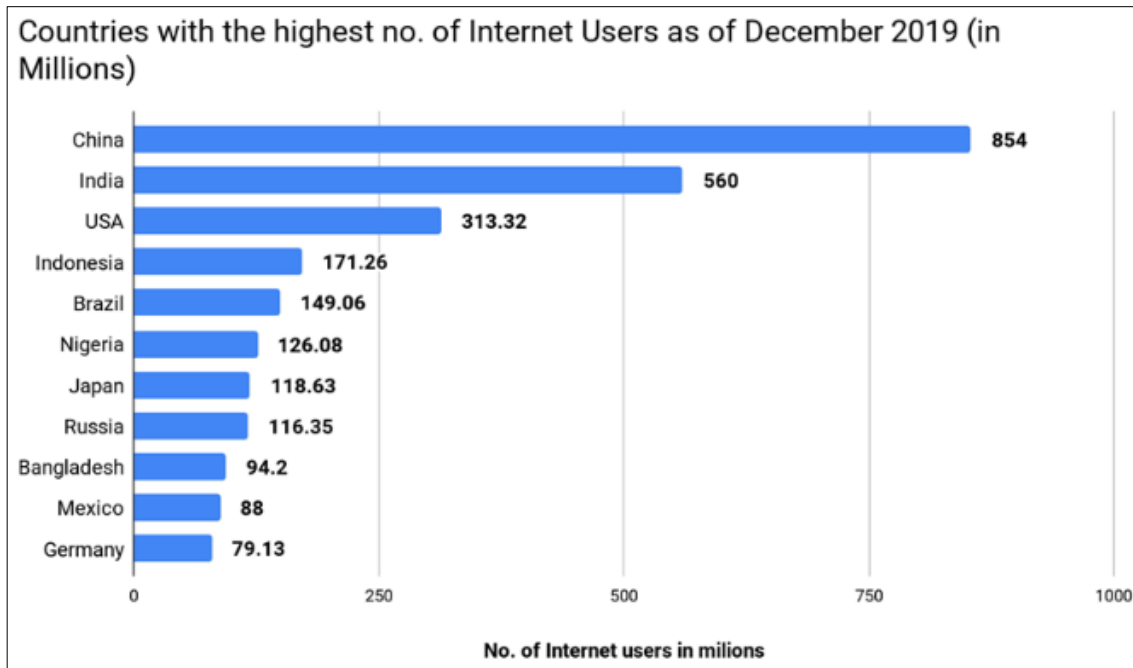
Keywords: tourism, hospitality, digital marketing, website traffic, business generation, audience

Introduction

While digital marketing has been around for a number of years, quite recently it is gaining the much needed significance. It is certainly going to become a full-fledged department of its own in Multinational corporations, and in smaller organizations, this would either be outsourced or managed by the owner.

From the graphs below, some factual statistics about digital development in 2020 can be inferred.

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Source: Statista

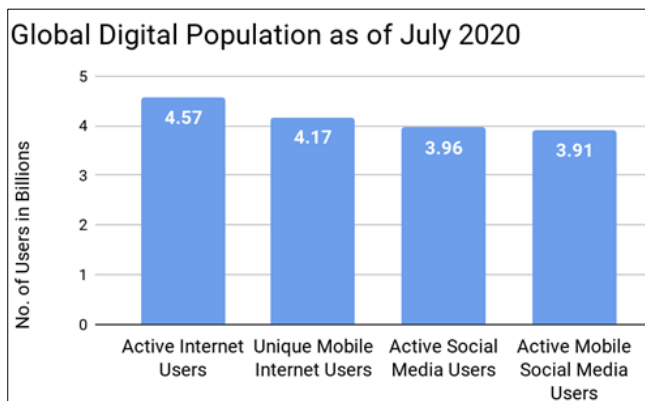
Fig 1: Country-wise distribution of Internet users as of December 2019

The above graph shows the no. of internet users in millions, distributed across various countries as of December 2019. It is evident that India stands at the 2nd position globally, which makes it a lucrative market for digital avenues.



Source: Statista

Fig 3: Online Travel Market Statistics



Source: Statista

Fig 2: Global Digital Population as of July 2020

The above graph shows the global digital population as of July 2020.

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), India ranked third among 185 countries in terms of travel and tourism’s total contribution to GDP in 2018.

The following figure is a snapshot from Statista which shows the online travel market statistics and facts. Over the last decade, most businesses have been increasingly digitised. In particular, the travel industry has worked diligently to establish its online presence. Travel e-commerce and review sites are mainly made up of online travel industry. The e-commerce sites for travel specialize in the sale of travel goods such as flights, lodging and car rental. These can either be bought directly through the website of a travel company, or through an online travel agency (OTA).

In 2017, online bookings contributed to US\$ 448 million in revenue generation, US\$ 675 million in 2018, and US\$ 486 million in 2019. About 70 percent of air tickets are now booked online in India. Several online travel & tour operators have emerged in India and are unique options for customers. Market Players aim to ensure convenience for their customers by providing all the services available on a single platform. For example, Makemytrip.com and a host of other websites have a complete basket of deals, including outbound and inbound tours for leisure and business trips, hotel and car reservations, holiday packages in India and abroad, etc.

Both in the years 2018 and 2019, FHRAI (The Federation of Hotel and Restaurant Associations of India) stood for protest against online travel and food aggregators such as Zomato, Make My Trip and Goibibo, for the exorbitant discounts and offers given by them on their online interface. These practices were said to have been undertaken to distort market prices, and gain extra commission.

Customers are able to find these OTAs and OFAs easily because their bread and butter is online and thus have a good SEO, unlike normal hotels. This is the reason why every hotel and restaurant brand went online, sooner or later.

Now, during COVID-19, that everything's online, hotels can also not do sales calling because-

1. The people who were working from the office before are now working from home.
2. Their sales person will not be allowed to visit in an office under usual circumstances because of the threat

of COVID-19 that he may bring along.

That is why every hotel needs to shift to digital altogether. As per our secondary research undertaken on a sample of 10 hotels worldwide (namely, The Oberoi, The Taj, Marriott, ITC, Hyatt, IHG, Wyndham hotels, Hilton hotels, Accor hotels, and Treebo Hotels), Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp are the dominating channels from where these hotels themselves receive online traffic.

The following charts depict the same facts-



Fig 4: Daily time spent on Facebook



Fig 5: Average daily time on YouTube

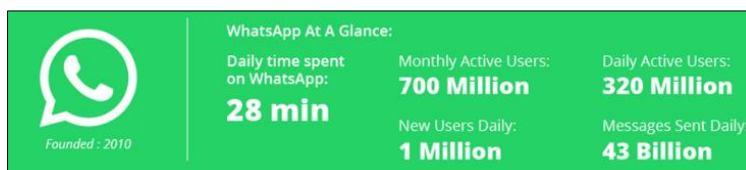


Fig 6: Average daily time on WhatsApp

To understand the integration of the tourism and hospitality industry with digitalization, the following graphs by RivalIQ

can be referred to.

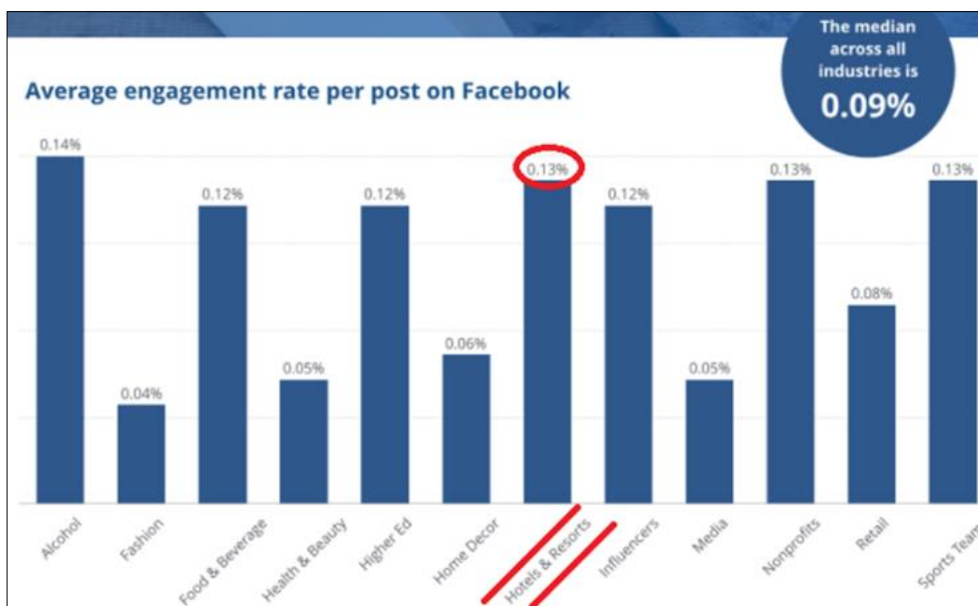


Fig 7: Average Facebook Engagement Rate per post

The above graph shows that the average engagement rate per post on Facebook in 'Hotels & Resorts' segment stands

at 0.13% in the year 2020, while the median across all industries is 0.09%.

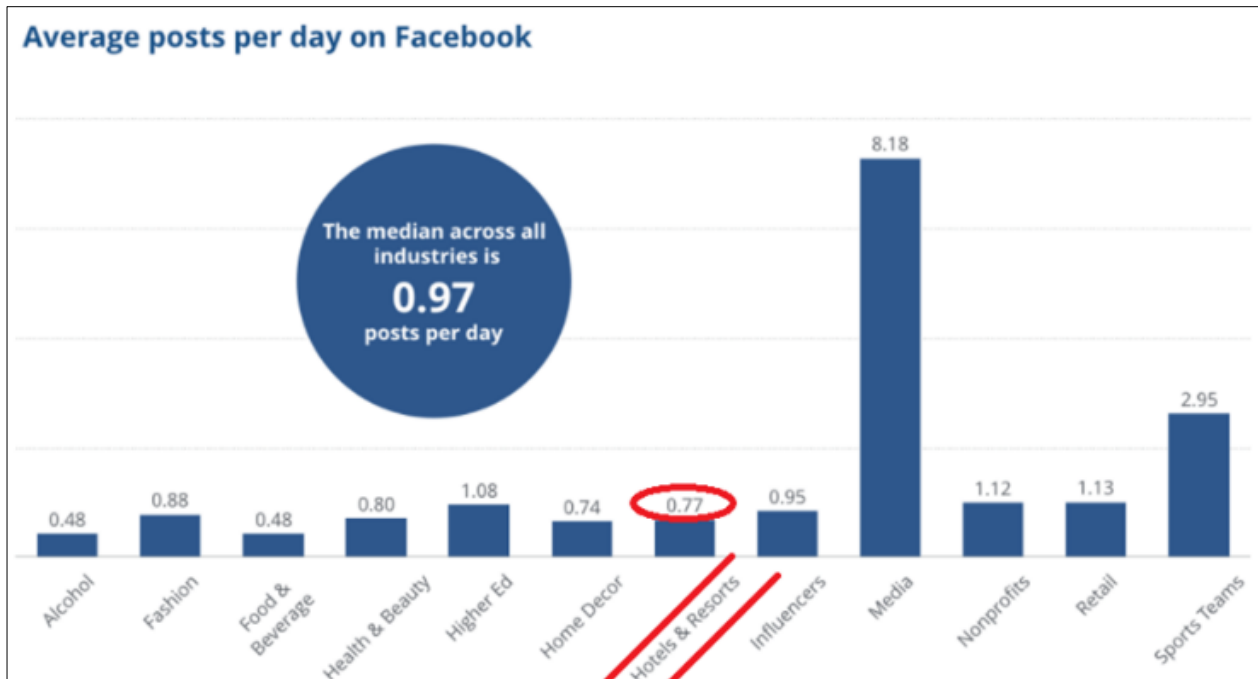


Fig 8: Average Facebook posts per day

The above graph shows that the average posts per day on Facebook in 'Hotels & Resorts' segment is 0.77, while the median across all industries is 0.97 posts per day.

The above two graphs clearly indicate that if Facebook post per day is increased in the said segment, the engagement rate would also increase.

Statement of Problem

While digital marketing has been around for a while, it is only recently garnering the attention it deserves. In multinational enterprises, it will almost probably become its own department, whereas in smaller businesses, it will either be outsourced or controlled by the owner.

But how successful is this shift online? Will the customers follow through?

The study is done considering 400 respondents as a base for primary research to know the effectiveness of various platforms like Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube, etc.

A secondary research was also done in a study of ten hotels around the world (The Oberoi, The Taj, Marriott, ITC, Hyatt, IHG, Wyndham hotels, Hilton hotels, Accor hotels, and Treebo Hotels), from data collected from platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and other social media channels.

Geographically the study is based on India and all the research is done within its geographical boundary, while following a combination of simple random sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling for a time duration of eight months.

Research Methodology

Primary research was done, through sampling method (Simple Random Sampling combined with Convenience Sampling method)

Here, Convenience Sampling refers to a research strategy in which researchers obtain market research data from an easily obtainable group of respondents.

Simple Random Sampling refers to a sampling method in which every item in the population has an equal chance of being chosen for the sample because the selection of items is solely based on chance or probability, this sampling methodology is sometimes referred to as a method of chances.

Through this combination, a team of 5 people could collect data from across India, working online.

For secondary research, a variety of Google websites and different tools available were used to gather information. (Name of tools and sites)

<https://www.similarweb.com/>

<https://moz.com/>

<https://www.semrush.com/>

Primary Research

According to our primary research undertaken across India, gathering 400 respondents, 78% respondents possessed a travelling job, and approximately 63% respondents showed interest in ordering food online, 1 to 3 times a week.

The below map shows the state-wise distribution of respondents across India, and reflects a substantial count of responses.

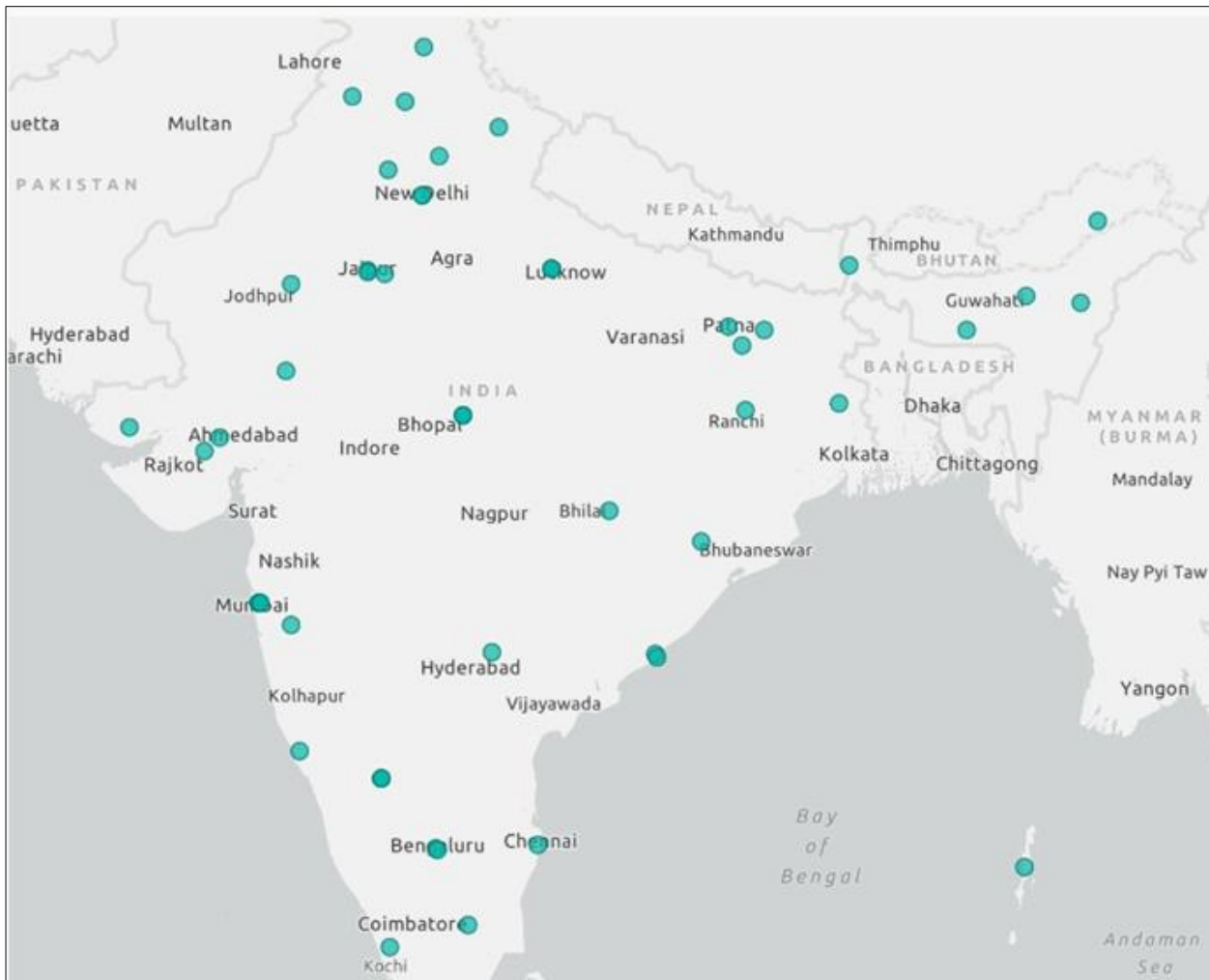


Fig 9: State-wise distribution of primary research respondents

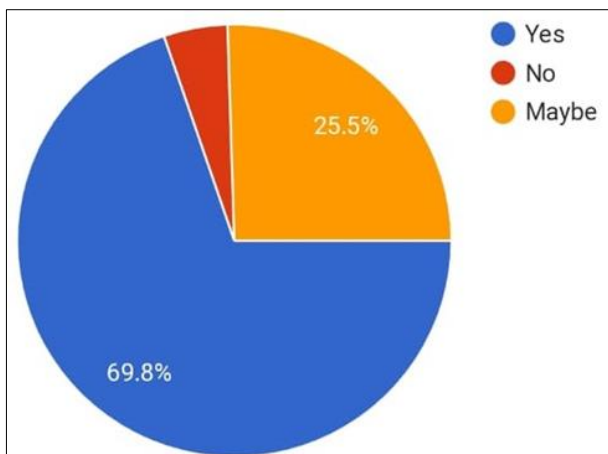


Fig 10: Response on “Do people trust on a hotel’s website when it presented facts and history of the city”

Approximately 70% respondents are of the opinion that if they see a hotel promoting the history and culture of any city on their website, it would increase their trust in the hotel’s brand.

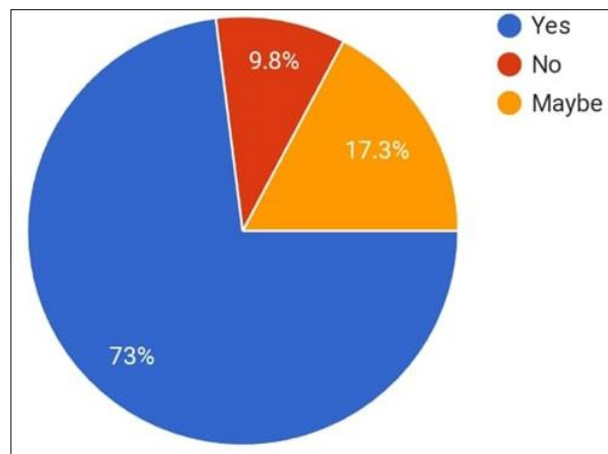


Fig 11: Response on “Would you like to know about a destination on the hotel’s website?”

It can be seen from the above pie chart that 73% respondents like to read about the history of the city on a hotel’s website they are going to visit next.

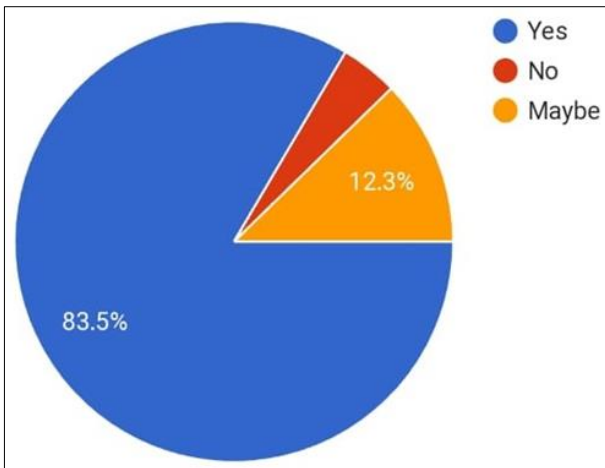


Fig 12: Response to Hotel brands giving tourism information on website

Approximately 84% of the respondents feel that hotel brands must give out tourism information such as Best night clubs in the city or Heritage places in the city, to guests on their own websites.

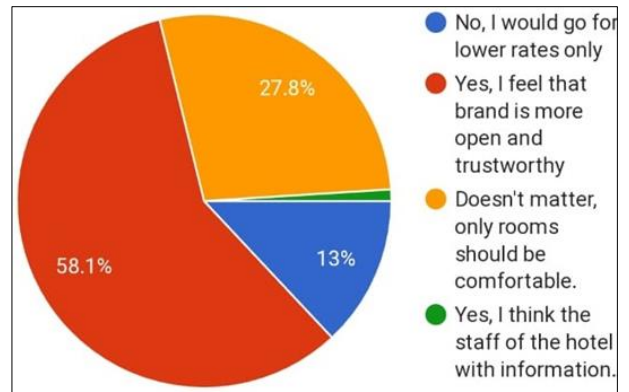


Fig 13: Response on paying extra to Hotel brand

Also, 58% respondents are of the opinion that they won't mind paying INR 100/- more to the hotel which has all useful city information on its website. They feel that such a brand is more open and trustworthy.

As per our secondary research for Website analysis, undertaken on a sample of 10 hotels worldwide (namely, The Oberoi, The Taj, Marriott, ITC, Hyatt, IHG, Wyndham hotels, Hilton hotels, Accor hotels, and Treebo Hotels), the following was inferred-

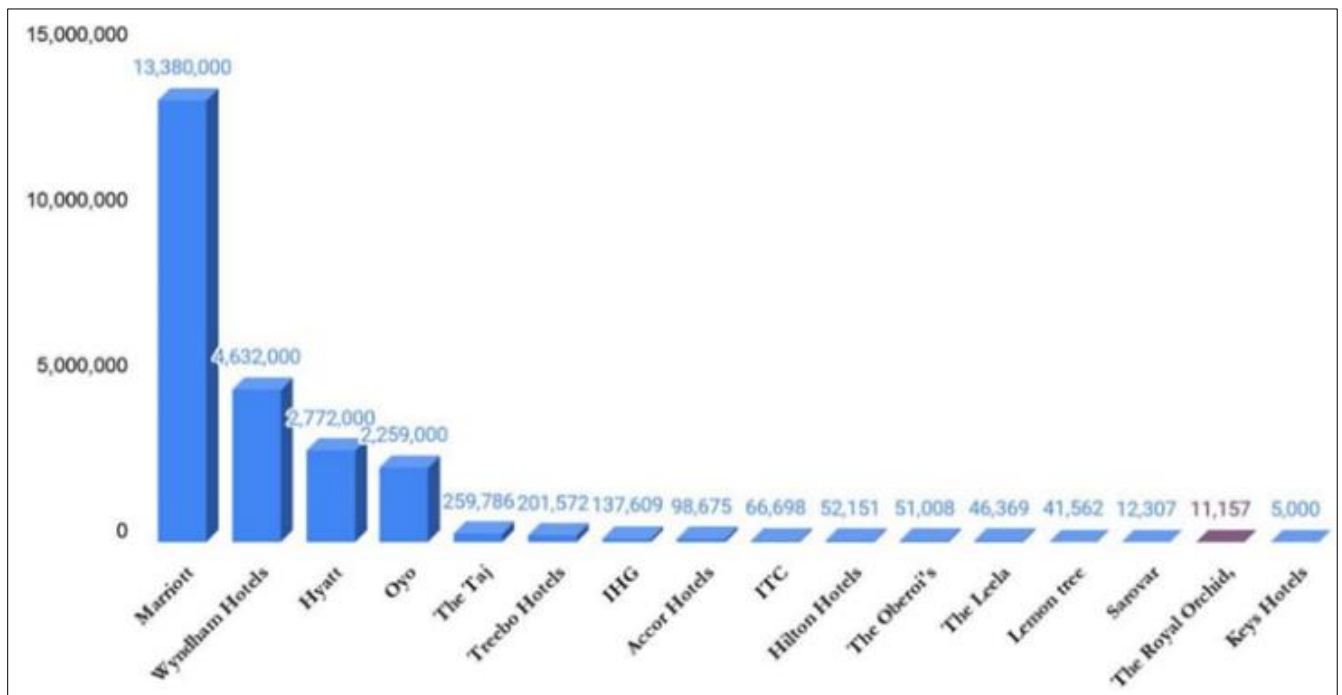


Fig 14: Average monthly website traffic by hotels worldwide

The above graph shows the average monthly traffic that is generated by different hotel brands worldwide.

The below charts show website traffic acquisition of these hotel brands from different sources.

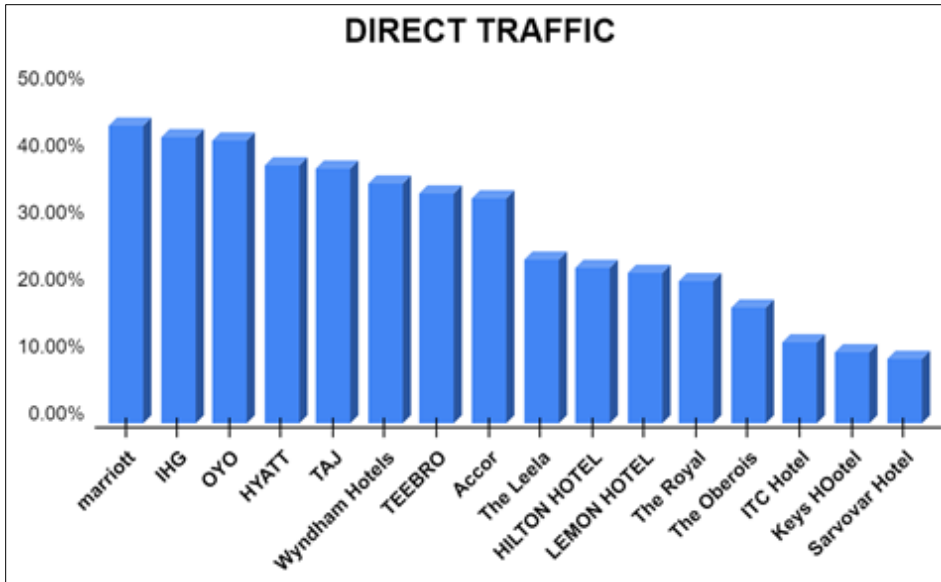


Fig 15: Traffic acquisition through Direct Traffic

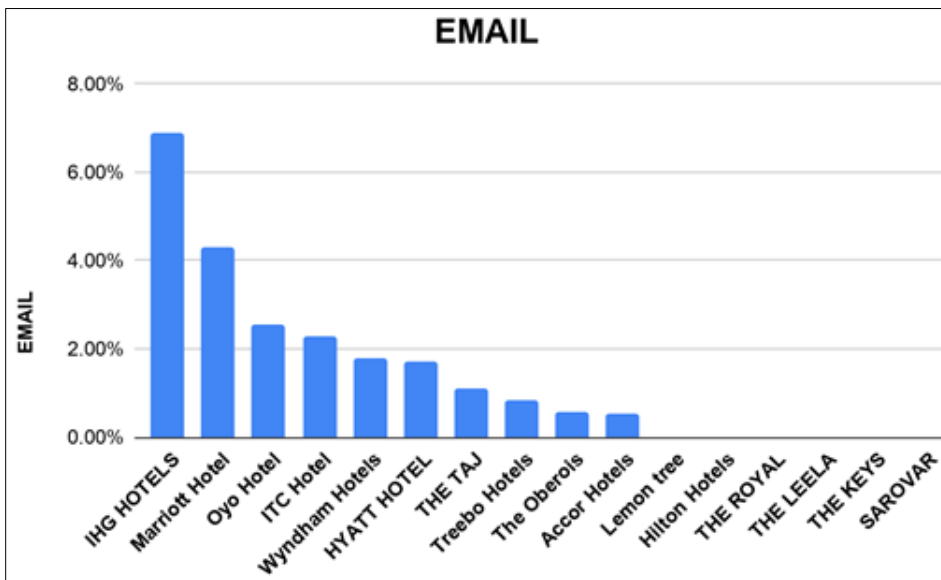


Fig 16: Traffic acquisition through Email

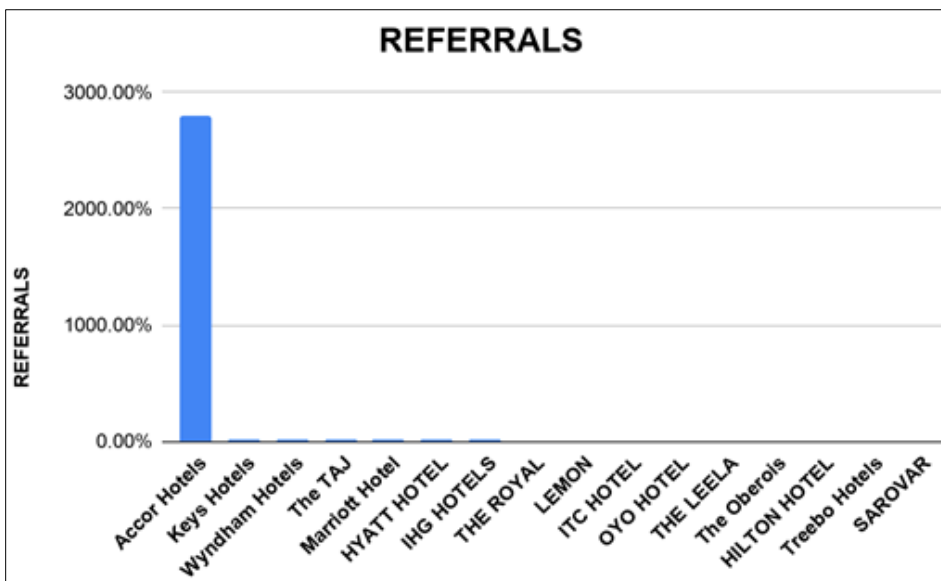


Fig 17: Traffic acquisition through Referrals

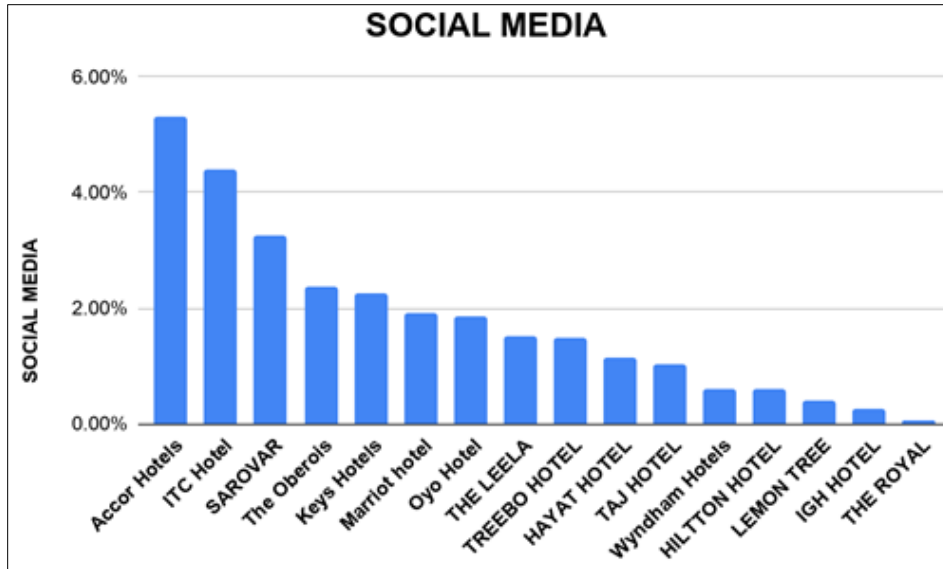


Fig 18: Traffic acquisition through Social Media

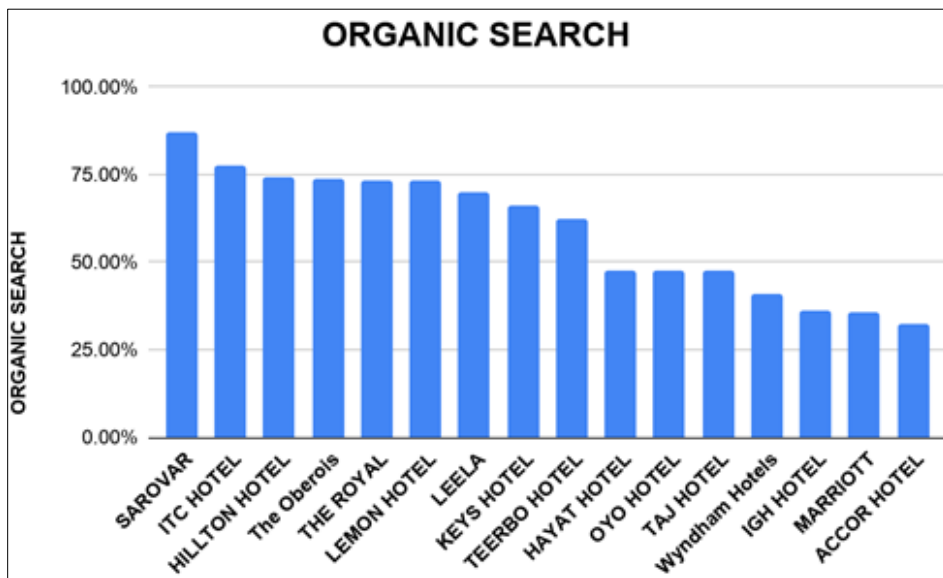


Fig 19: Traffic acquisition through Organic Search

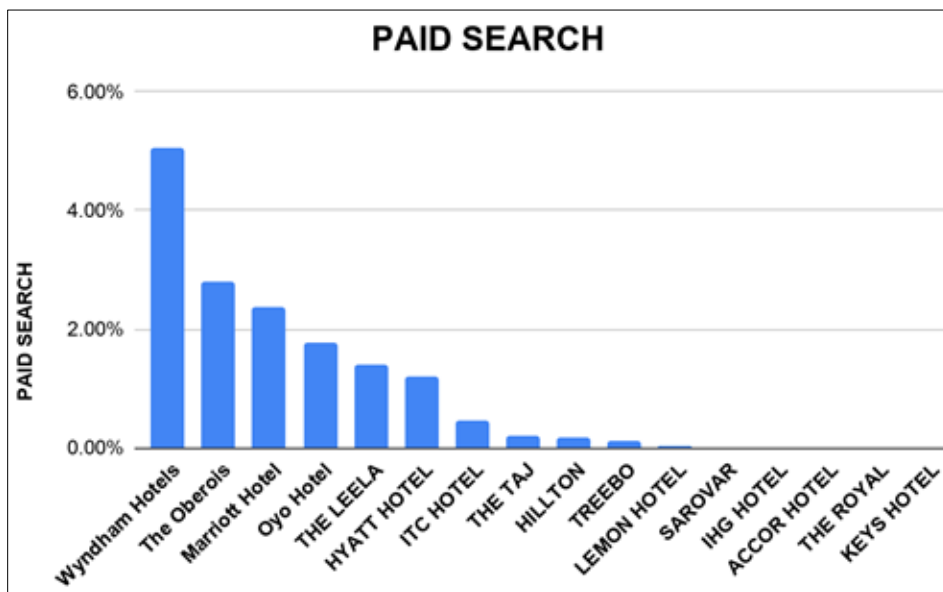


Fig 20: Traffic acquisition through Paid Search

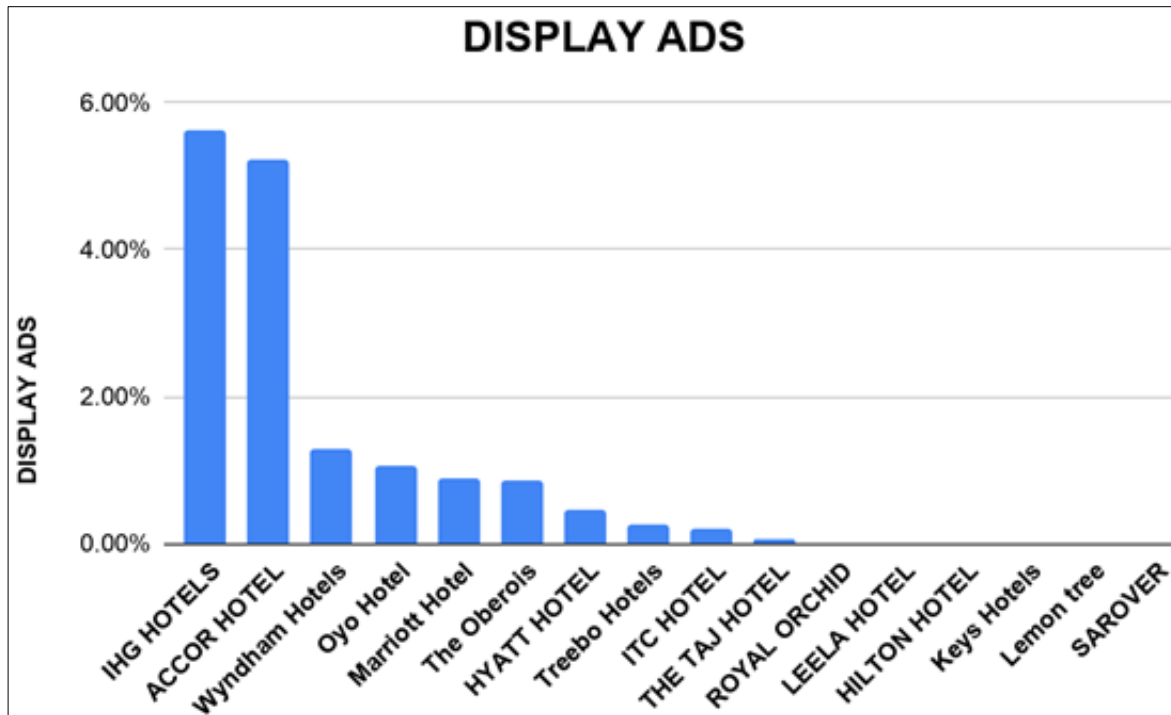


Fig 21: Traffic acquisition through Display Ads

Coming to domain authority, we could draw an inference about all the hotel chains through referring their Domain Authority Score, Total Visits and sources of traffic, which are mentioned as under-

The Oberoi

Domain Authority Score- 65 Average Monthly Traffic- 75.45K

| URL | DA |
|-----------------|----|
| oberoihotels... | 65 |

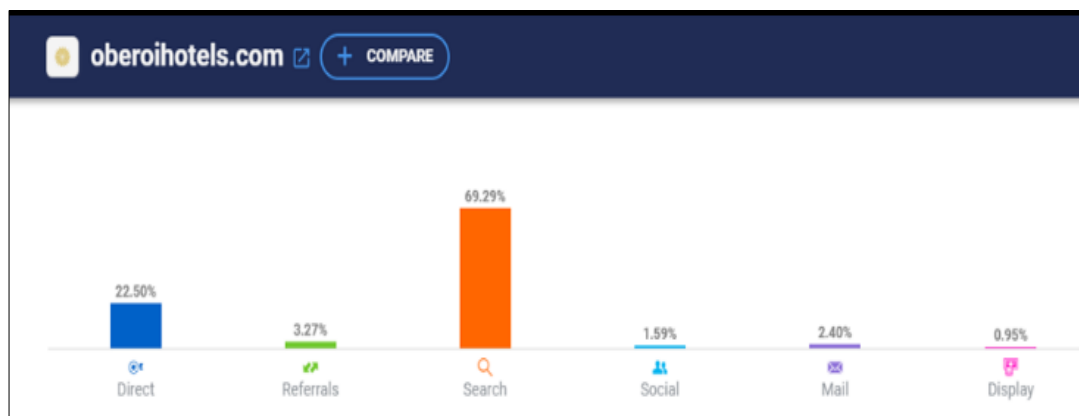
(Source: Moz)

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Total Visits | 75.45K ▲ 30.77% |
| Avg. Visit Duration | 00:02:51 |
| Pages per Visit | 3.57 |
| Bounce Rate | 50.68% |

(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 22: DA score- The Oberoi

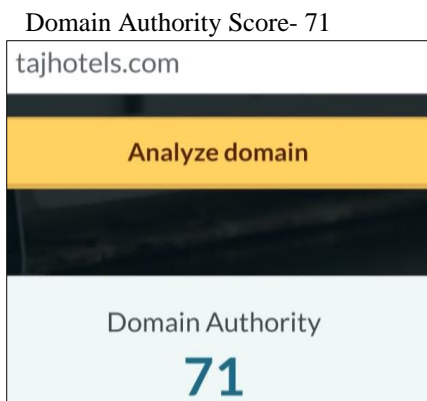
Fig 23: Monthly website traffic- The Oberoi



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 24: Source of traffic- The Oberoi

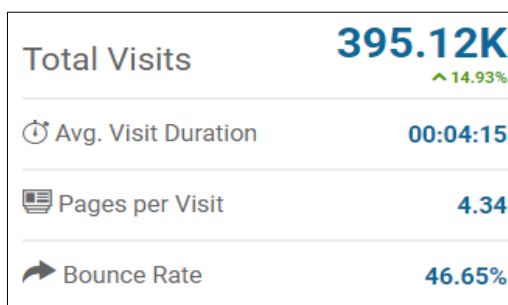
The Taj



(Source: Moz)

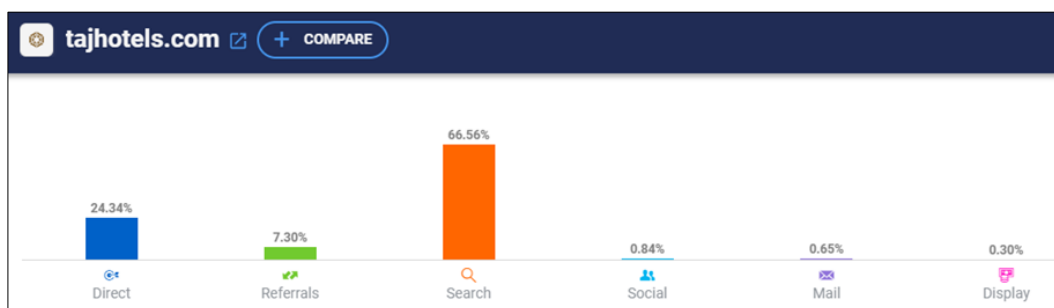
Fig 25: DA score- The Taj

Average Monthly Traffic- 395.12K



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 26: Monthly website traffic- The Taj

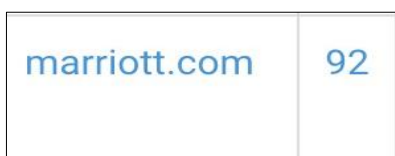


Source: Similar Web

Fig 27: Source of traffic- The Taj

Marriott

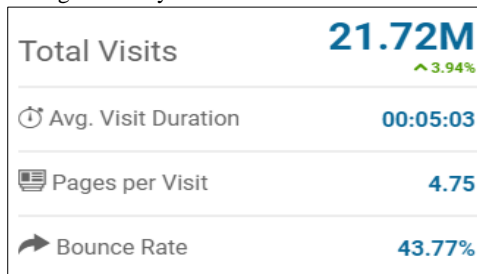
Domain Authority Score- 92



(Source: Moz)

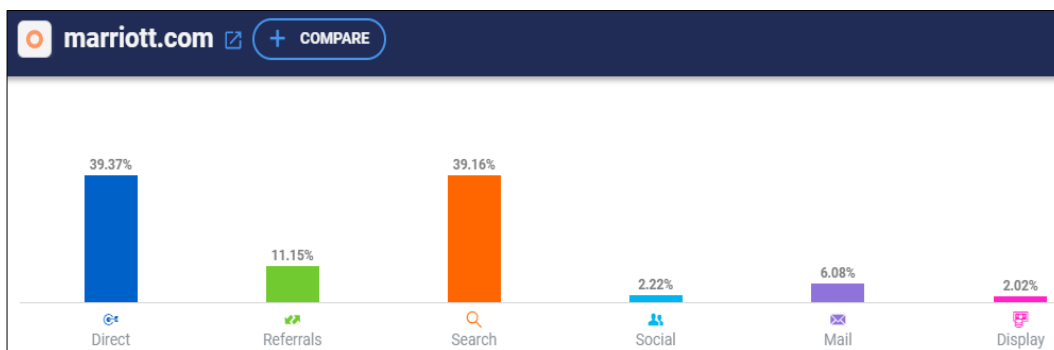
Fig 28: DA score- Marriott

Average Monthly Traffic- 21.72 million



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 29: Monthly website traffic- Marriott



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 30: Source of traffic- Marriott

ITC

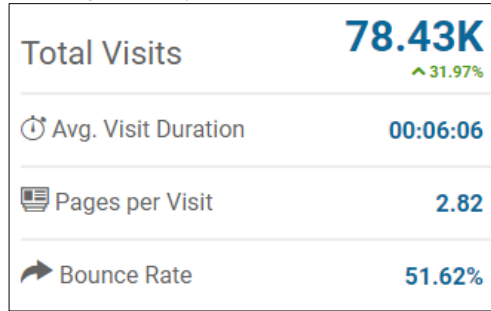
Domain Authority Score- 60



(Source: Moz)

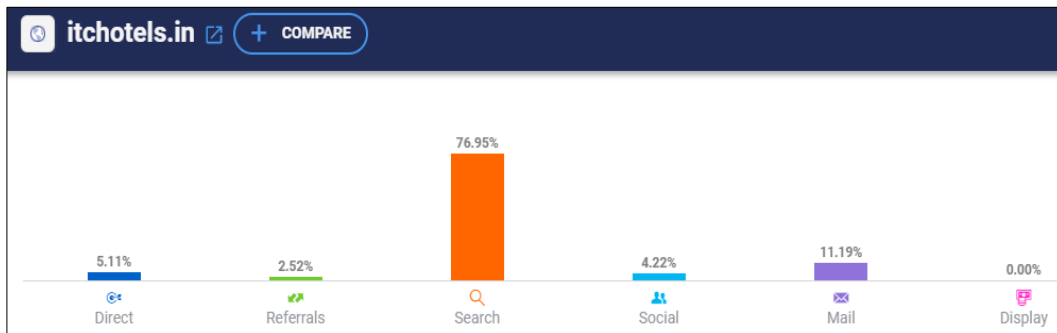
Fig 31: DA score- ITC Hotels

Average Monthly Traffic- 78.43K



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 32: Monthly website traffic- ITC Hotels

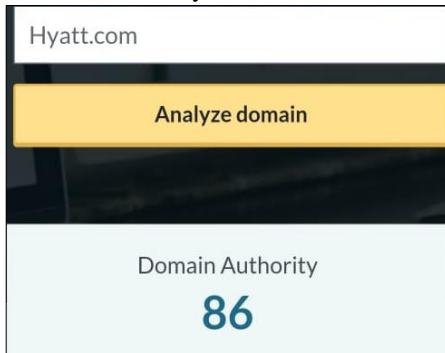


(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 33: Source of traffic- ITC Hotels

Hyatt

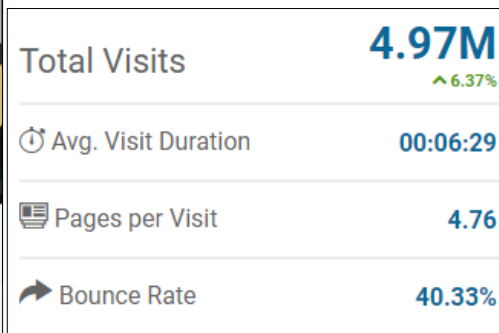
Domain Authority Score- 86



(Source: Moz)

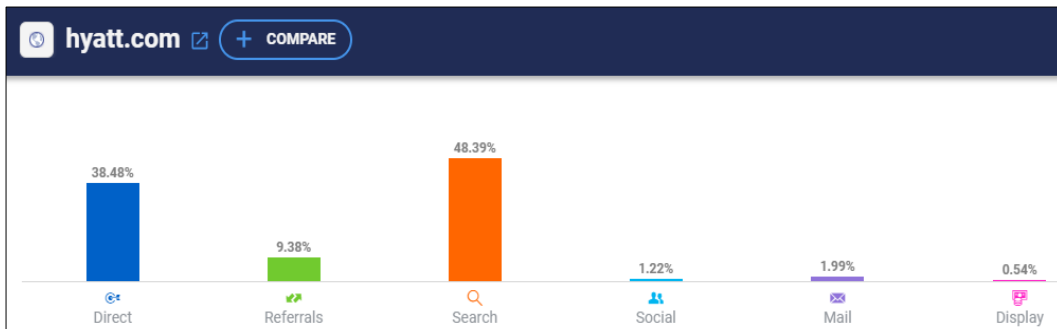
Fig 34: DA score- Hyatt

Average Monthly Traffic- 4.97 million



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 35: Monthly website traffic- Hyatt



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 36: Source of traffic- Hyatt

IHG

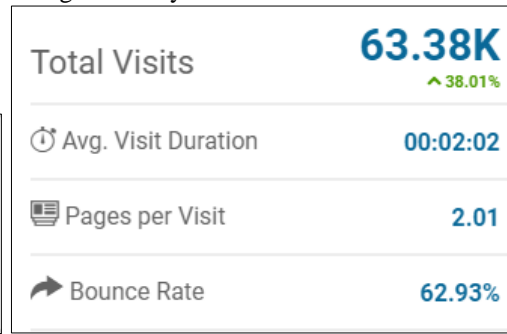
Domain Authority Score- 63

Average Monthly Traffic- 63.38K



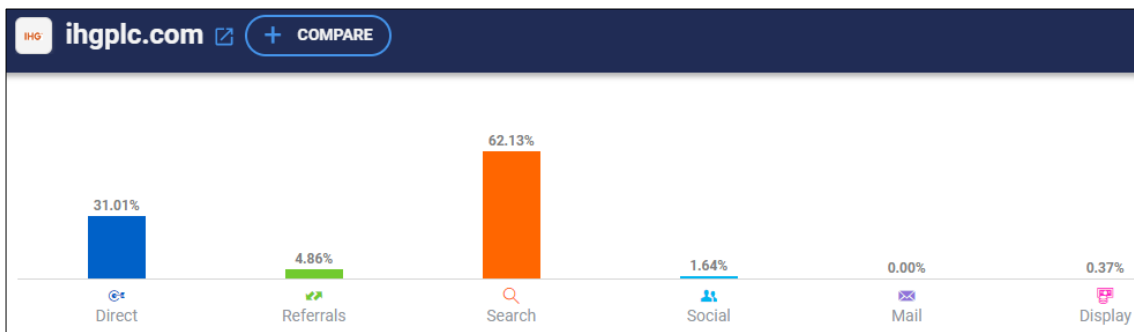
(Source: Moz)

Fig 37: DA score- IHG



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 38: Monthly website traffic- IHG



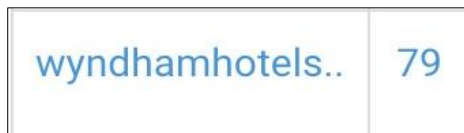
(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 39: Source of traffic- IHG

Wyndham hotels

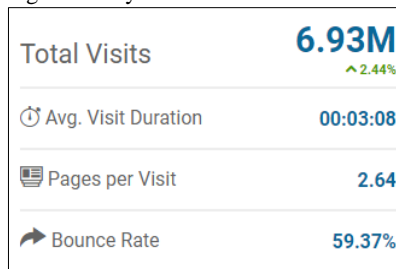
Domain Authority Score- 79

Average Monthly Traffic- 6.93 million



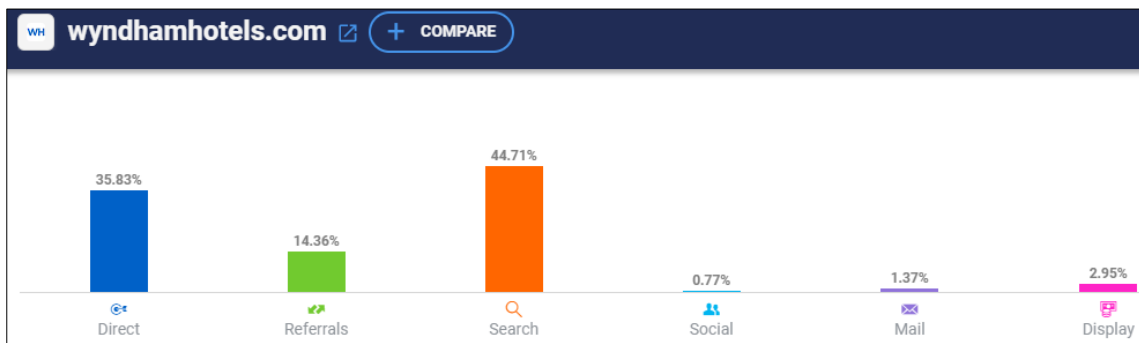
(Source: Moz)

Fig 40: DA score- Wyndham Hotels



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 41: Monthly website traffic- Wyndham Hotels



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 42: Source of traffic- Wyndham Hotels

Hilton hotels

Domain Authority Score- 90

| URL | DA |
|--|----|
| hilton.com | 90 |

(Source: Moz)

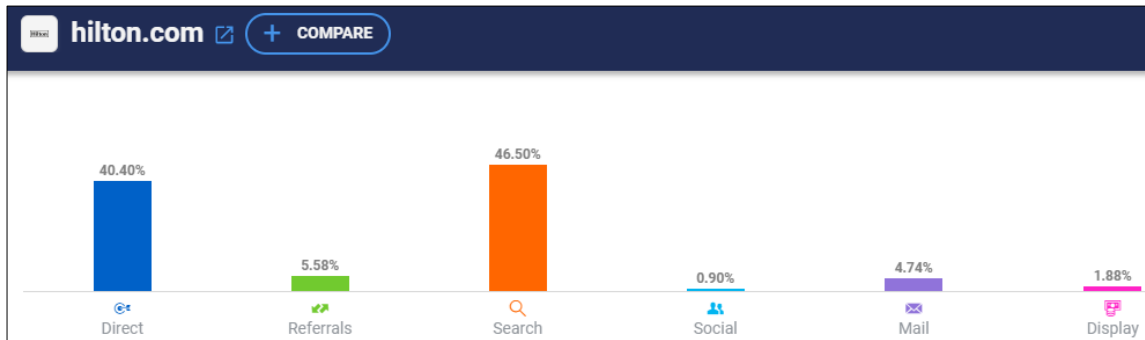
Fig 43: DA score- Hilton Hotels

Average Monthly Traffic- 13.99 million

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Total Visits | 13.99M ▲ 1.43% |
| ⌚ Avg. Visit Duration | 00:05:30 |
| 📄 Pages per Visit | 5.57 |
| ➡ Bounce Rate | 33.64% |

(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 44: Monthly website traffic- Hilton Hotels



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 45: Source of traffic- Hilton Hotels

Accor hotels

Domain Authority Score- 81

| | |
|--|----|
| group.accor.c.. | 81 |
|--|----|

(Source: Moz)

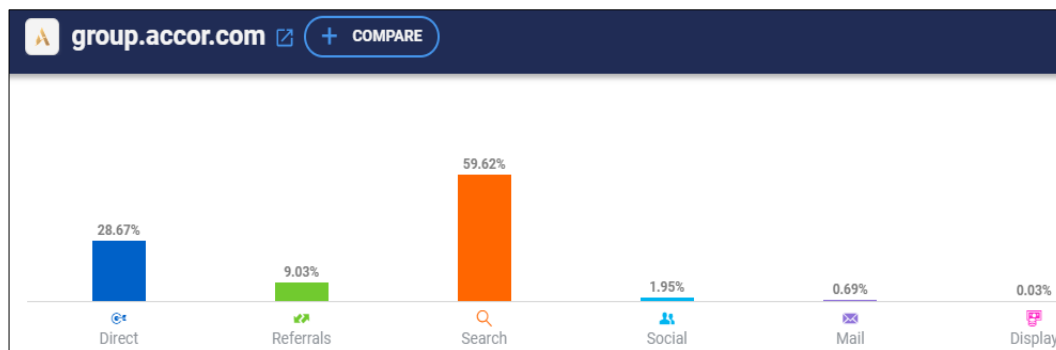
Fig 46: DA score- Accor Hotels

Average Monthly Traffic- 240.58K

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Total Visits | 240.58K ▼ 5.44% |
| ⌚ Avg. Visit Duration | 00:01:22 |
| 📄 Pages per Visit | 2.14 |
| ➡ Bounce Rate | 53.91% |

(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 47: Monthly website traffic- Accor Hotels



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 48: Source of traffic- Accor Hotels

Treebo Hotels

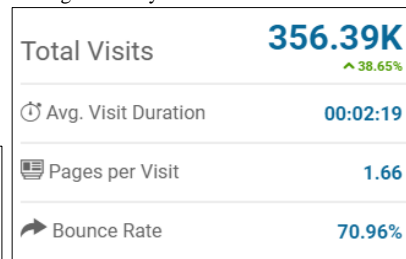
Domain Authority Score- 45



(Source: Moz)

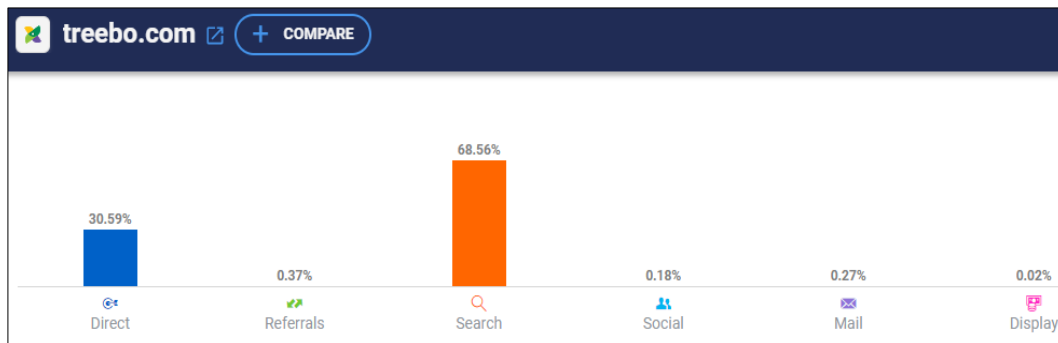
Fig 49: DA score- Treebo Hotels

Average Monthly Traffic- 356.39K



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 50: Monthly website traffic-Treebo Hotels



(Source: Similar Web)

Fig 51: Source of traffic- Treebo Hotels

Website/Web traffic refers to web users who visit a website. It is measured in visits, and is a common way to measure online business effectiveness at attracting an audience. It also helps in establishing domain authority and worldwide rankings.

Domain authority, as the name suggests, is a search engine ranking score, developed by SEO software company Moz. It predicts a website’s ability to rank on a search engine results page, or SERPs. The domain authority score ranges from 1 to 100. The higher the score, the better the website will rank. Better ranking suggests mass accessibility. The top 3 companies globally, as per MOZ, which have a domain authority score of 100 are google.com, apple.com and youtube.com, ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

Rankings in search engine optimization refer to a website’s position in the search engine results page. There are various ranking factors that influence whether a website ranks higher on the search engine results page based on the relevance of content to the search term, or the quality of backlinks pointing to the page. Content relevance is an important element because plagiarism is prevalent across fields. Content relevance is all about audience’s perception about the consistency of the content or issues searched. Any content is considered relevant if it is able to help users make decisions or make progress towards their goals. When it comes to the use of quality backlinks for exhibiting strong worldwide rankings, older domains can be more powerful than newer ones, as a search engine sees them as more trustworthy. Therefore, backlinks from older domains can help the ranking more than newer sites.

Conclusion

As we can observe from the feedback of the audience that they would like to know more about the native city of the Hotel on the hotel’s website (night clubs, shopping,

cooking, history etc.) and from the secondary research we could figure out that the hotel brands with websites having such information and blogs, social media posts, experience videos are attracting more audience to their page. This helps in decision making power of the audience due to the brand always being present in front of the audience’s eyes (increasing brand recall).

This simply indicates that moving online with your hospitality business is the best option for the time to come. Zomato is about to expand and hold an IPO in 2021.

Recommendations

1. Media Calendar

A media calendar is a documented timeline of content and where you plan to publish it. Usually it includes creatives, copies, header descriptions, captions, upcoming status changes, scheduled promotional activity, deadlines for monitoring and updates to existing content. They are designed using various formats, such as paper documents, spreadsheets, or software tools.

There are several trends in Hospitality on social media on different days of the week. For example, during weekends, social media posts generally have content that speaks about the hotel’s “Lit evenings”, or “Family Brunches”. On thursdays, hotels make it a point to share a throwback memory with the audience and promote it as #ThrowbackThursday.

2. Usage of social media platforms

Social Media has applications in abundance for different purposes, say meeting old and new friends, professional networking, sharing photos and videos, etc. Likewise the content on these social media platforms differ. For example, Facebook & LinkedIn for offers & feedback, Instagram for Brunch food & Event photos, Youtube for informational

videos about the city, facts, history, most common tourist places, etc.

3. Online PR

Online PR is the use of internet to communicate with current as well as potential clientele in public domain. It may include disseminating information about joining of a new official, new schemes & offer launches, etc. For example, The Leela Palaces, Hotels and Resorts, announced the appointment of their new General Manager for the Udaipur hotel. Also, Marriott launched a new travel programme for small-to-medium-size businesses (SMBs), and communicated it to the public at large via online media.

4. Tools to know the best

Social listening tools are a must for getting to know the trend analysis & the impact of communication of the brand, whether positive or negative. Several tools that aid in ascertaining the general audience sentiments through advanced analytics include Mention, If This Then That (IFTTT), Hoot suite and Keyhole.

5. Market Intelligence Gathering

It is the best way to keep oneself updated. The whole process of collecting and analyzing digital consumer data gives insights and makes decision-making smooth. Data points such as product usage, competitors' success and failures, new market segments, etc. assist a brand to streamline its marketing efforts in a more systematic way.

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