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Analysis of International Hotels' Social Media Strategies

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Abstract

The hospitality industry and customer behaviors are unceasingly due to technology. Social media is thoroughly used by many people globally today and is a primary digital form of communication that includes these developments regarding hospitality, which is discernible in the most recent way. Eminently, it is being browsed for recreation, providing notable information and promotion for businesses. Social media generates outstanding opportunities for corporations to run critical digital marketing strategies. One of the essential considerations of enterprises is to grow their sales volumes, and advertising on digital platforms is a much more operative approach than any other platform nowadays, so hotels are thriving to a great extent in that regard. Accordingly, in this descriptive research, how international hotel brands in Ankara use digital marketing for expanding their marketing activities within the framework of brand standards and to what extent the usage of such platforms is practical concerning their sales are analyzed by using the interview technique.

Keywords: brand standards, tourism, sales, management, digital marketing, descriptive research

Introduction

Cognizance of innovation has been inclined more recently in an effort to meet the altering characteristics of modern hospitality. In the past decade, we have seen the proliferation of social media (SM)—the term will be stated as SM from that point, since corporations are able to turn online SM accounts into significant revenue generators. A qualified SM management waxes the revenues while affording an expeditious reputation. Still, there are some companies that remain obdurate on such statements tenaciously and even, repudiate the advantages of SM because of several reasons. First, their management do not consider SM platforms as marketing instruments and eschew investing in them. Managing SM could be cheap, howbeit, its marketing functions would be still time-consuming. Veraciously, it's unacceptable of those management not to invest in digital marketing. SM is still new to some areas and especially older generations do not use and espouse SM for neither social–recreation, nor business-oriented purposes. Because of its nature and functions mainly, digital marketing is different from the traditional one such as television or radio. For business people who are not into that, investing time and money in it equals a total loss

as digital marketing may still come in sight too equivocal and confounded, for all traditional marketing platforms' popularities have been supplanted by it. Cardinaly, in that digital age, companies ought to be assiduous in those new marketing areas with no exception.

Marketing is about boiling down communication to its essentials, whereas SM management is too significant to be repudiated as a network instrument, hoping just the old-fashioned advertising mediums are enough would be extremely quixotic for any kind of corporate enterprise. For most users, SM could be construed as a platform to be kept up with their networks or be informed about developments worldwide. This is a great opportunity for marketers to get active not only randomly, but also for targeted users.

Mobile applications and platforms are being updated and improved algorithmically in a continuous manner so as to make their functions more useable as well as visually and auditorily attractive. Austerely, SM is of the key elements that ameliorate the bad reputations –especially for egregious crises that occurred in a short period of time. For instance, a simple good or service failure posted online could go viral and reach millions of people within a minute. If crisis management is handled professionally, the situation could even become an opportunity to vindicate the company's previous bad reputations by turning undesired circumstances into positive outcomes thoroughgoingly.

The hospitality industry consists of complex dynamics since it includes more than 40 different sectors combined. Moreover, the core elements of hospitality are human relationships. In the name of technological developments, what would appear on the horizon will not be solely efficient alone. Inter-personal relationships have to be maintained between the guests and the staff.

Brand value is important and those hotels that serve on an international basis could be claimed to be more successful. Their operational implementations are tremendous, and consequently will be more beneficial for academic science fields. Findings and conclusions are gathered in the light of the information gained as an output of those meetings. In marketing, it is understandable to certain different and derivative elements are intermingled, it is advantageous to use SM in all aspects. So as to illustrate, were an SM account to contain high qualified images and videos, it is quite possible to gain the attention of more people. To examine the essentials of successful SM management theories and practices in the hotel industries, this research paper is concluding the nature of international hotel brands' SM management strategies and how to use SM platforms in order to generate more revenues is also partially discussed.

Review of Literature

Dynamics of Tourism

Tourism has gained significant importance in the leading developing economies. The industry occurs by integrating many different and diverged fields combined and is stated as a social science field (Tasci, 2020). Moreover, hotel executives consider the hospitality industry as dynamic, to regard it as somehow complex; the features are able to differ in many important respects. The unparalleled specialty of the industry is being consisted of the human workforce which determines its success as qualified employees (Gebbers, 2019). Physical designs could be derivative or completely unique and ostentatious, whereas distinguishing elements are human capital and

service quality which could not be duplicated easily (Cheng and Wong, 2015). Therefore, as Muskat *et al.* (2019) specified the qualifications for people not only positioned in frontlines, but also at the overall operational level, individuals employed in the hospitality industry should have to be hard-worker, continuously outperformer, innovative, communicative, and complete tasks without any hitch, or shortly, have leadership characteristics. Nonetheless, even though hospitality is mainly a human-based workforce, service management is affected by recent technological developments and become much more user and customer-friendly (Buhalis *et al.*, 2019). For that to gain a competitive advantage by attracting more guests to the hospitality industry, applying innovative and advanced technologies are essential. Like most the other industries, hospitality runs through competitiveness, and to overcome it, guest satisfaction is being maintained with the help of co-created value –emerged from the interaction between the hotel and the customer (González-Mansilla *et al.*, 2019). Only those companies that adapt to new sightlines of hospitality could thrive in tomorrow's hyper-competitive marketplace as O'Connor (2020) argues one of the most crucial and critical aspects of digital marketing.

Recent Digitalization Strategies

The notion of international hospitality requires high-quality service generated by human touch and technological innovations combined since without it, service personalized for every single guest would be difficult to achieve. To outgrow internal and external operational applications, hotels should seek innovative procedures and apply necessary adjustments (Tweneboah-Koduah *et al.*, 2020). Tari *et al.* (2019) indicate initiatively that hotel managers and their employees must consider innovativeness in a sustainable approach to develop quality standards as organizational culture. Potential guests drone to prefer hotels that serve distinctly, and also brands that are innovative, appeal to the emotions and signify something intelligent or interesting about the user, and are ethical as well (Rosli *et al.*, 2019). Mobile apps, artificial intelligence, virtual, and even augmented reality could be significantly expedient to generate new kinds of services (Arica *et al.*, 2022b). While hotel management applies renovations and improvements for their facilities so as to develop service quality, however, guest satisfaction also requires exceptional service operation along with excellent construction (Torres and Kline, 2013). Skills like exhilaration, straightforwardness, and adroitness are competencies to assure high customer satisfaction additionally.

Accommodation enterprises should attract repeat customers and build up customer loyalty since retaining repeat customers is more costly considering new ones (Leung and Wong, 2019). In today's digitalized age, even administrative levels have the opportunity to interact with their guests—especially with advanced technologies like virtual reality or touchscreens for ensuring guests have quality time and get informed about overall operations (Shin and Back, 2020). According to the González-Mansilla *et al.* (2019), value co-creation, as an organizational process, implies the participation of managers, employees, and customers but the ultimate and primordial actor is always the customer and that is the reason why the quality of service should be at the top-notch level. Digitalization is not only limited to operational aspects of international hotels but also marketing activities. Systematic strategies for managing businesses' online reputation –especially on SM, contain high importance. With the help of the prevalence of SM use by both individuals and organizations led to opportunities to blend boundaries between the two spaces, individuals can act as online brand representatives of the organizations they work (Sihi and Lawson, 2018). It is not probable to transact and communicate with SM users unless businesses maintain valuable

content, so the key element in SM management is to thrive by brand's content. Regardless, the more qualified information corporations create for other people, the better their businesses will be and eventually, more prosperous. The multitude of SM platforms requires the utmost level of attention that matter; it's necessary to have but not a means of conducting business relied on. Unsurprisingly, those equip and divisions are experienced in marketing aspects of hotels whereas SM management requires much more know-how, technical details, certain instruments, and also professional assistances are not an exception.

Brand Standards

Hospitality markets have competitive environments and so as to stabilize their existence, they should maintain a good reputation and steadfast loyalty (Lee *et al.*, 2010). Guest loyalty is one of the key elements for hotel enterprises to co-create a mutual and valuable relationship. On one hand, total quality management should be more than just an expressed statement; every single part of the functional organization ought to be clearly aware firm's missions to make it sustainable and effective (Viada-Stenger *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, with ambiguous information regarding goods and services, it is feasible for customers to feel accusations towards firms and brand loyalty is being vanished (Kurtulmusoglu and Atalay, 2020). The study points out that targeting the correct marketing procedures is necessary for any hotelier due to the fact that the competitive environments are becoming more and more aggressive while the resources are limited. Hu and Trivedi (2020) maintained some affective points about detecting brand performance, mapping the competitive landscape, and developing competitive strategies for hoteliers. Otherwise, consequences of erroneous decisions taken by the top management levels obliquely and directly generate potentiality to cause undesired circumstances for the organization and may damage brand values unintentionally.

Strong brand equity is completely maintained when customers' expectations are not only met but also exceeded (Seric and Gil-Saura, 2019). Emotional commitment directly influences relational and transactional loyalty outcomes (Konu *et al.*, 2020). Hotels have to develop their dynamic capabilities and innovative aspects to get a competitive advantage proactively, against potential or unforecasted market conditions. Anning-Dorson and Nyamekye (2020) indicated the fact that dynamic capabilities have strong performance impacts on organizations. So as to gain potential customers' attention, trust and positiveness, firms should be able to make a presence on a social network platform and then by focusing their efforts on creating interesting content, fostering a community, and engaging with their customers in a more direct, casual, and personal way, the targeted customers would embrace and appreciate firms' modality and become more receptive towards their favorite brands (Papasolomou and Melanthiou, 2012). When implemented correctly, the theory empowers hotel reputations since hotel staff; especially frontline workers may generate a favorable hotelier image and add value to their brand.

Social Media Management

SM allows two-way communications for hotel brands and guests to an advantageous extent. It is a highly functional tool for potential guests as well, and hotels should request their guests to evaluate overall performances and leave positive reviews on SM, especially on TripAdvisor (Ak and Dincer, 2019). Mobile devices have many functions such as online booking, being in communication with others, and sharing their views of experiences on SM platforms and sites

(Pabel and Prideaux, 2016) along with SM platforms, and it is highly common to review the comments of buyers who previously bought the same product online (Sheth, 2020). Travelers can post their opinions and experiences on SM in order to share ideas for other potential travelers to have better travel experiences (Mirzaalian, 2019). For hotel brands, the number of likes, shares, and comments is an effective assessment of consumers' engagement on SM, along with keeping regular communication and being in touch, for instance, hotels' responses, likes, and returning users' direct messages (Su and Mariadoss, 2019). Tourism and hospitality brands are operating SM marketing strategies and enable potential travelers' decision-making process to be easier for their business activities (Creevey *et al.*, 2019). As Firat (2019) italicized; providing information in digital advertisements about product, service, or brand draws consumers' attention. By monitoring review sites, rectifying any reported deficiencies, and encouraging future guest comments, firms should protect themselves from the impact of web-based criticism on their brand and the reputation of the organization (Browning *et al.*, 2013).

In most cases, travelers share their experiences online because of altruism, personal fulfillment, and self-actualization (Arica *et al.*, 2022a). The need for status is relative for one person to another and different SM platforms generate differential effects for hotel guests (Mou *et al.*, 2019). Using SM to create customer value is not without its challenges as with any other strategy implementation or technology initiative, inconsistencies in terms of responses to customer requests and outdated information can negatively influence desired outcomes (Agnihotri, 2012). SM platforms are being examined by firms that spend a significant amount of resources so as to understand the fundamentals of SM. For travelers, any potential internal and external threats to the destination – cases as crime, disease, physical, equipment failure, weather, cultural barriers, and political crises, makes SM a platform to be informed about the circumstances (Schroeder *et al.*, 2013). According to Casado-Díaz *et al.* (2020), regarding the online guest comments and hotel responses posted on TripAdvisor –the largest online hospitality rating and review website, findings show that it is essential to consider negative comments by guests. The conclusion of the study indicates it is notable for hotel administrations to respond to negative comments made on TripAdvisor, whereas no response at all is considered the worst situation for guests.

Digital and mobile technology make it a fertile ground for marketers trying to engage customers. (Kotler *et al.*, 2022). Effective and professional SM management help brand loyalty and customer loyalty enhanced (Ibrahim, 2022). Additionally, brand value could be co-created with businesses and their targeted customers together in order to be more effective and valuable (Gensler *et al.*, 2013). SM as a pillar of advertising shouldn't be misleading; otherwise, guests will react in nugatory. Valos *et al.* (2017) have stated in their study that organizations are increasingly using mobile marketing, programmatic advertising, and SM to achieve competitive advantage. Also, today SM is integrating mobile marketing and programmatic advertising which enable it to perform more functionally. Organizations entering new markets and attempting to compete effectively must be flexible, ultimately there may be no need to adapt existing administrative processes and management procedures for those refusing to engage with SM and the informational opportunities thereof are strategically product-focused rather than customer or market (Marshall *et al.*, 2012). Marketing departments are sometimes integrated into sales departments, howbeit, in today's conditions, prestigious hotels have SM marketing divisions separately, generally consisting of SM specials, executives, or managers depending on the organizational structure and size (Kotler *et al.*, 2022). What is more, hoteliers may find better suggestions in order to determine the optimum strategy for their SM channels by using analytic tools. For hotels' revenue

management, online-based sales tools that provide two-way communications are necessary, however, traditional sales and marketing activities also have their own targeted segment so it is essential to manage both new and old management methods combined in regarding extent.

SM has become a vital part of firms' marketing activities in regard to existing and potential customers and it was proposed that SM should support a firm's marketing strategy according to Venciūtė (2018). Mentioned SM platforms greatly enable salespeople to demonstrate and perpetuate their sales dynamics while building online relationships with customers. Organizations are willing to become available on digital platforms but still, there are some uncertainties and blank areas while applying digital requirements, especially in SM marketing (Leung et al., 2013) and especially for hotels, SM carries great importance for tourism customers during their travel decision process. Beleraj (2019) claimed the main drawbacks of SM marketing are trust and security, user-generated content, and negative feedback, meanwhile Yao *et al.* (2019) mainly indicate that for companies, SM marketing is essential yet requires the utmost level of professionalism in order not to face with privacy and data security issues.

Methods

This study includes hotels located in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey where the hotels are business-oriented more than leisure. The interview method with international hotels is deemed to be more suitable for this research. Currently, there are a lot of different international brands being operated in the city; Best Western, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental Hotels & Resorts, Marriott International, Radisson Hotels, Warwick Hotels, Wyndham Hotels, and also Turkish international brands which are Limak Hotels and Divan Hotels. The brands and the duration of interviews had been reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. International Hotels in Ankara

Hotel Brands	Hotels	Star Ranks
Accor Hotels	Mövenpick Hotel Ankara	5
	ibis Ankara Airport	3
Best Western	Best Western Hotel 2000	3
Divan Hotels	Divan Ankara	4
	Divan Çukurhan	4
Hilton Hotels & Resorts	Ankara HiltonSA	5
	DoubleTree by Hilton Ankara İncek	4
	Hilton Garden Inn Ankara Gimat	5
IHG Hotels & Resorts	Holiday Inn Çukurambar	5
	Holiday Inn Kavaklıdere	4
Limak Hotels	Limak Ambassadors Hotel	4
Marriott International	Lugal, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Ankara	5
	JW Marriott Hotel Ankara	5
	Sheraton Ankara Hotel & Convention Center	5
Radisson Hotels	Parkinn By Radisson	4
	Radisson Blu Ankara	5
Warwick Hotels	Warwick Ankara	3
Wyndham Hotels	Wyndham Ankara	5
	Ramada by Wyndham	5
	TRYP Wyndham Oran	3

During the review of the literature period, significantly informative research questionnaires have been analyzed. However, due to the fact that even the most well-documented methods of the studies still have some limitations, thus, open-ended questionnaires are thought to ensure more data in that regard. Moreover, digital marketing functions are updated as technological developments improved. Therefore, international hotels are running their marketing activities and also collaborating with advertising agencies in order to perform more professional marketing outcomes and at the same, improve their revenue generator points. It was expected to gain more knowledge beyond what was studied before or had been asked. Moreover, as far as what is studied, there is no review of literature conducted as such criteria recently. International hotels certainly could be viewed as more successful, so their implementations and brand standards were thought to be more beneficial for academic purposes, and the most informative aspects of the hospitality industry.

The technological developments are becoming updated level by level, especially during the pandemic period we are living in. Due to the COVID-19's global and sudden strikes on the economy, all enterprises are using technology's advantages but successful businesses are the ones keeping up with innovation-oriented operations in general. To examine updated protocols, the following questions have been asked to the interviewees.

- What are your social media management strategies and procedures so as to increase your sales volume?
- What are the most effective SM and digital marketing instruments with regards to increasing sales and marketing-oriented operations, and why?
- How can you monitor the success and effectiveness of your SM activities?
- May you describe the challenges of digital marketing and the reasons in that regard?
- Do you monitor your competitors' sales and marketing activities, and if yes, how do you proceed accordingly?
- Is there any protocol you may address it insufficient concerning yours and the markets in general, or could you claim your strategies are essential outright?

Questions above were asked to hoteliers, the interviews were conducted and the data were written down, with the consent of the participants. The majority of data has been gained face to face. Nonetheless, online video meeting applications and derivatives –Zoom and Microsoft Teams, were preferred by some of the hoteliers and no interview has been run via a telephone call.

Before the interviews, hotels in the city have been revisited and their statuses were examined. Currently, there are 20 international hotels that are being actively operated. Also, their web pages and SM accounts are revisited at the first step and most of which were conducted in the hotels, averaging 22 minutes approximately as stated in Table 2.

Table 2. Interview Details

Code	Position of Interviewees	Duration
K1	Event Sales Manager	27
K2	Digital Marketing Executive	35
K3	Marketing and Corporate Communication Supervisor	39
K4	Banquet Sales Manager	24
K5	Corporate Sales Manager	27
K6	General Manager	17
K7	Junior Sales Executive	9
K8	Corporate Sales Manager	11
K9	General Manager	24
K10	Front Office Manager	13
K11	General Manager	23
K12	General Manager	20

Meetings were held with 12 of the 20 international hotels in Ankara. Before the interviews, the effective positions of those hotels in terms of SM management were examined, almost all of them are managing SM actively. However, it has been observed that some hotels do not run any SM account, or even are not available on any platform –presumed it is because they were opened recently. Of course, within this framework, it would be quite wrong to remove the usual and old methods completely. Nonetheless, some hotels either do not present in SM or are not active SM accounts, even though their brands require so. Because of that, meetings had not been set with them. Therefore, attempts were made to reach the remaining 17 hotels. When hotels were reached via e-mail and/or telephone, it was brought forward that two of those hotels are collaborating with advertising agencies, and were not able to participate in the study because of their high operational volume, therefore those two hotels were neither able to help, nor incorporated into the study. Senior executives working in three other hotels were informed that due to the hotel’s and brand’s policies, it is forbidden to publicize hotel information –including academic studies. For the stated reasons, only 12 hotels could be reached, and the meetings were arranged face to face, and some of them preferred to participate via Zoom.

Findings

Brand value could be developed by high perceived quality for hotels and since they actually organizations consist of individuals, hoteliers’ reputations become an integral part of it. For example, a general manager interviewed stated they are trying to increase the prominence and reputation of their hotel. Hoteliers are started to take a step ahead to be more visible on SM. The interviewee K1 claimed *“We are trying to promote our personal qualifications and status on social media by being present at events, meetings, projects, etc. In this way, we can find also an opportunity to share our achievements and experiences with not only our friends and networks but also the public. We promote those on our hotel’s official social media accounts and also our brand’s to gain more prestigious aspects had ensued”*.

“The most considerable advantage of social media is, that it can focus more easily on the targeted audience, and the quantity of mentioned users grows over time, this can only be achieved by managing social media in qualified and continuum notion. So as to reach an inclined amount of followers, images and videos need to be continuously posted because the vast majority of users are on SM due to the attractiveness of the account, our hotel’s image respectively” as K7 maintained.

In one of the meetings, it was stated that the moment of SM is eminently high. A marketing executive underlined; *“As an organization, we have four different social media accounts; we use Instagram, which is the most active one, and besides, also Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn we currently operate. Regarding referred platforms, there are differences in terms of content, that is, there are more options for Instagram, and it’s what makes the platform propitious for users. In addition, LinkedIn pages are operated mostly on a corporate scale and our contents are being shared with both the industry-related connections and the hotel’s own employees. As an example, there are special days and weeks which our brand had set to celebrate worldwide. The brand’s official global LinkedIn profile and also our hotel celebrates Housekeeping Week to motivate our employees that work in the housekeeping department and raise awareness for their hard work. Exclusive contents about such specific dates are being shared, and it is possible to follow national and international achievements through our social media accounts. That empowers our brand value and reputation as well, so basically we are promoting our professionalism on social media”*–K2. Another participant indicated as; *“Shares were made for job opportunities on LinkedIn. Instagram is being used by more people, and the time spent on this platform is outgrowing, so the weight is given to it more than LinkedIn or Twitter. Interacting and engaging with travelers are optional if their observations or experiences are positive, howbeit, taking actions regarding negative reviews are non-negotiable in such cases. While giving our attention to complaints, our brand requires us to move the case off-line, so we kindly request them to contact us by e-mail or phone to resolve the negative circumstance in private”*–K3.

To illustrate the importance of leading the market share, K10 marked the key points of strategic aspects of social media management; *“All reservations generated from social media platforms are available in the “source” section of our automation program, and also in the main reporting system of our brand. All the data we segmented on this subject are important to us to a prodigious extent. We measure weekly where we should focus, and subsequent to it, we take action plan accordingly –notwithstanding, 50% decrease we are seeing compared to the year before”*. Regarding their strategies, the interviewee continued; *“Our main goals are called GSI –Guest Satisfaction Index. Those criteria determine our performance on guest satisfaction. And for the hospitality industry, proactively, we follow our competitors’ scores, not their strategies. If we are in a position to follow their strategies, that scenario indicates we are one step behind them, and we never want it”*. Another key point denoted by K10 was; *“Nowadays, all businesses with impeccable social media management have an advantage. To give concrete data specific to tourism, guests spend 20% more on hotels with internet reviews of 4 and 5 stars on TripAdvisor or Google Reviews. More interestingly, if you do not have guest comments on such platforms, near-nigh 50% of travelers do not book your hotel anymore. From the passive state that has been a direct factor in their decisions, guests who consult others about travel plans and pick up hotels from catalogs have become much more active by researching online, and the point of reference is social media in multitudinous cases”*.

A general manager –K9, elucidated their overall strategies as; *“The strategy we follow in social media management can be summarized as follows: velocity, personal touch, new and precise contents. Our priority towards positive or negative feedback we receive on social media is to respond to them as soon as possible. Despite our brand standards, the feedback we bring forth is required to be well asserted within 72 hours, but we are quicker than that. All front desk staff and our MOD –manager on duty, respond to feedback via a required channel. Thanks to our IT manager, all comments and questions are able to be replied to from a single platform. Another*

issue is that we pay close attention to maintaining brand quality approaches for these messages specifically, to respond, and do not use clichés and standard texts. An Indifferent or inattentive response template can be an indication that the problem is not taken seriously. It can also be concluded how inefficient it is to be evaluated by the hotel. It should not be forgotten that every return is a great opportunity for our hotel, it's essential to the process. We try to keep our content constantly updated on SM. Invariably we want to draw our followers' attention by sharing newly opened outlets or special events”.

Regarding the platforms they most give weight to, K9 remarked *“The social media platform we use most effectively is Google. The reason is; Google’s reservation platform –Reserve with Google, is ahead of online travel agencies in booking traffic. People go to Google Reviews not only for their travel plans, but also for every other subject, and assume the reviews are prevailing indicators for such purposes”.*

International luxury hotels initiated to create and manage more than one account for some of the digital platforms in order to draw more attention to their diversified services. A digital marketing executive –K3, concluded during one of the interviews as *“Mainly we administrate an Instagram for our hotel in general besides of three other ones, regarding our exclusive bar, SPA center, and luxury dining restaurant. Each of them has its own concept and management methods; the SPA center’s pictures and videos are generally including lighter and refreshing colors. The restaurant is reflecting a warm atmosphere whereas the bar has darker tones so the content for the dining restaurant has to include also more warm colors and the ambiance for the bar has dark and shade colors. And also jazz is our preference for background music with some low key lighting to match with bar’s noir atmosphere”.* Another general manager –K6, initiated *“Besides of our hotel’s main Instagram page where we post our staff’s photos, celebrations, and services we offer in general, our bar’s separate account consists of our events and participating guests’ images, in a manner of shady and gloomy atmosphere and sometimes just black and white”.* The hotel staff explained the effects of the ads on the sales as follows: *“For the Halloween Party, our terrace where the event made was shared online by making a free advertisement only two or three days prior the event and the capacity was filled by half in previous years”.* They also put forward that the terrace, however, was completely filled for last year, by doing the sharing a little while ago and by advertising daily. On the other hand, advertisements are made for other outlets as well.

And surprisingly, interviewees indicated that international hotels are collaborating with bloggers and influencers so as to reach their targeted audiences easily. All hotels that had been interviewed maintained Instagram as the most lingering and somehow strongest SM platform. As most Instagram users are aware, there are qualified and professional bloggers and influencers on the platform to help the firm gain publicity (Flavián, *et al.*, 2021).

Another technique for following up on the success of SM and their instant reverberations are also SM platforms. During a meeting, a manager made a statement and maintained *“We occasionally invite bloggers and influencers to our hotel, generally for events like Sunday brunches or even much greater ones like New Year’s Party. They promote our business and give detailed information to their followers. Actually, it is a great marketing tool but we have to be sure about their targeted audience. For instance, our last blogger guest has an Instagram account for luxury dining places in Ankara. You may not get benefited from an influencer or a blogger if their*

followers –and also your targeted audience, are resides in other geographies” K8. Nonetheless, he concluded as “Social media management is not as easy as it’s seen”.

One of the biggest problems for SM is, that although can be used instantly and online, its impact may not be measured clearly like many other marketing dynamics. One participant on this topic explained as; *“Of course, we cannot thoroughly observe how much of our marketing strategies generate sales every time. However, it is still possible to see how actively we get to interact on social media. For example, we invite leading bloggers or media personalities to our organizations in order to observe and evaluate how much online reaction they receive, positive/negative feedback on their posts regarding our hotel and the event, and also the interaction patterns in our own accounts –as hoteliers. How many stories and posts have been shared by other people on Instagram and how do other followers evaluate them, we should consider and analyze all situations and cases. Apart from Instagram, we especially pay attention to “hashtags” as interactions on our Facebook and Twitter accounts. Likewise, the hotel’s corporate profile and employees can share such posts with their own networks on LinkedIn, which is a more professional, business network platform”–K11.*

Unfortunately, it isn’t highly straightforward to operate and observe the instant benefits of SM management. *“We may not see the constant results of our activities or indicate what percentages of today’s sales are due to a posted content yesterday. Nonetheless, we attempt to ask our guests how they reached us or heard about at some point”–K4.* Another interviewee noted *“Our reservation clerks and supervisors try to know about our guests at the reservation process according to the communication they are maintaining within the framework of our brand standards. On the other hand, also our brand has rigid policies regarding check-in and check-out operations. It is a must to ask about guests’ staying and as a result, request to inquire about their experiences via surveys. The surveys are the most significant criteria for our cooperation. An essential part of our hotels’ success is principally about guest experiences that are monitored by the questionnaires sent by their brand automatically after every check-out. Mentioned questionnaires have a section to measure guests’ perceptions of social media”. Hotel executive followed as “We trace and test our social media management’s success via those surveys to a great extent”–K10.*

Another interviewee concluded *“My job description includes organizations, meetings, cocktails, and mainly weddings. We show extra sensitivity for weddings and make plans as perfect as possible. Since we are in constant communication with our guests during the wedding planning, it is not difficult for us to get feedback on the work done”–K4.*

Regarding online reviews, K12 stated *“Social media platforms such as Google Reviews or TripAdvisor, where guests can communicate with each other, are evaluated in a continuum. We direct surveys to our guests for whether individual or company-contracted accommodation. We also direct surveys to our guests for events that include accommodation, such as weddings and organizations. However, in general, such surveys do not affect our brand’s global ranking. For the survey to be valid, the room rate must be above a certain level. In organizations, we sometimes give free rooms according to contracts, and therefore the survey is not being sent by our brand’s system”.*

K2 brought forward that *“We have a large number of followers on social media. In addition, due to our corporate approach, we do not interact with our followers through platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. We only respond to all positive or negative comments or requests from guests on TripAdvisor through our guest relations department. At the bottom of our responses, we also indicate the names of the department and the staff in charge, so that it is easier for our teammates to follow up on events, and we try to make our guests feel that we are giving exclusive interest and a certain amount of care”*.

For the guest comments, interviewee K5 mentioned *“We operate a well-established business, so we have a lot of regular guests. There are positive comments from our guests in any new service we implement and in operations where we make noticeable changes. We evaluate them through social media, and we discuss these issues at our weekly Monday morning meeting with hotel management and department managers together”*.

Moreover, the advertising activities of digital agencies are becoming an integral part of brand hotels. *“Our digital agency superintends our social media accounts, including Google. We mainly advertise at locations we target and at certain periods of the day, especially when advertising on search engines and social media. Every month, how many of these sites and search engines our advertising agency reaches us and is effective, we examine such issues in detail and take joint action with our sales department”*–K12.

However, there is a line that digital marketing may not be as functional as out-of-home advertising strategies; *“For all our advertising activities, including digital marketing, we try to get feedback from our guests staying at the hotel or coming for events whenever possible. Sometimes we run out-of-home ads, alongside social media ads. In particular, there are advertisements we give on billboards. In fact, since our hotel is close to the train station, we advertise on the billboards of train stations in other cities and indicate our proximity to the train station in our city. This strategy is a little more difficult to implement in digital marketing”*–K11. Nonetheless, to a certain extent, digital marketing could get malfunctional as K8 enlightened; *“Unfortunately, the most inordinate problems we face in SM are malicious or even denunciatory, negative comments that are resulted by external factors but still attributed to our hotel and brand”*.

Conclusion

Before analyzing the professional aspects of SM management and marketing, online SM accounts should be well instantiated. As an example, representing an international hotel’s Instagram should not be defined as taking lobby pictures with a smartphone and uploading them without editing. In that case, professionalism would not be considered at all and in fact, is a deficit regarding brand quality. That example is as momentarily incorrect as giving a room key card without its holder or not smiling at guests elegantly during greeting them. That is why professional hotel management are also outsourcing mentioned operations, but of course, under their supervision. Marketing departments and advertising agencies work jointly so as to create high-quality marketing activities. Such collaborations are able to help hospitality enterprises to gain more creative ideas and supply more professional touches for the productions. People employed in marketing departments may not have newfangled knowledge in regards to digital marketing approaches. Through the implementation of such consulting services, hotels gain more knowledge and understand the functions of their services (Michopoulou, 2019).

One thing will always be common in hospitality in spite of traditional service structures; digitalization, as technology is being integrated into tourism in a continuum while innovational applications and even regulations become collateral parts of it. For example, some companies don't phone, e-mail, or text their customers to get to know them but instead, create engagement and relationships through product experiences, brand-building advertising, web sites, and SM (Kotler *et al.*, 2022). Provided of course the hotels manage SM in a good manner, they do well to be successful in today's digital environment. SM enables word-of-mouth digitalized and companies ought to manage that function in an advantageous way so as to make an impact on online reviews and set ready proactively (Kim *et al.*, 2015).

Guest satisfaction begins with reservation and lasts until the checking-out process, however, in order to make guests appear at the first step, their attention should be drawn and influenced by brand image. Getting SM users' attention is notable so that the reservation process could be initiated. As Ballina *et al.* (2020) signified in their paper that setting specific hotel standards and having related quality certifications bring success –increased sales, higher occupancy ratio, or bigger market share.

Hotels not only in Ankara but also in global areas are persevering through the COVID-19, fighting against lower occupancy ratios and profit margins for a long period of time. Still, they are succeeding to maintain high-quality brand standards. Interviewed managers concurred; established brand standards are devoid of unprofessionalism. International brands are doing their best endeavors to complement their digital marketing activities and be present in SM. Not so far away, in the previous decade still, some hotels' sales and marketing functions were being operated as a single entity. In today's competitive and technological arena, assigning digital marketing duties to the sales department is scarce; actions should be taken with the assistance of advertising agencies. In order to manage such cooperation, first and foremost, brand standards shall be sustained during all stages of a guest's lifecycle. According to the interviews, a high degree of coordination between the hotel and the advertising agency is a must. The necessity of such collaborations has emerged since more clever sales and marketing activities are integral parts of high-quality services in the hospitality industry. Without any doubt, maintaining SM accounts actively and effectively is conducive to higher sales rates. Of course, traditional marketing instruments are not completely ineffective; however, not being present on digital platforms negates most of the potential marketing shares.

In today's conditions regarding international hotels, brand quality calls for excellence in both digital and non-digital platforms. The retention of following only traditional marketing activities will eventually slow down the sales figures. Uploading business-related content and responding to guests' activities shouldn't be decentralized; the last call always should be given by the hotel according to the interviewees, even though international hotels' SM accounts are run by both marketing departments and advertising agencies. Otherwise, even though the content is qualified, service and brand standards wouldn't be met, or worse, customer satisfaction might be failed. It should be reminded as; followers are either customers already, or potential ones. Untoward results are inevitable if the marketing activities are not properly held. It is convenient to gratify guests it is a desideratum, without any doubt. In order to compete in digital marketing, being visible on all SM platforms is essential. SM posts reflect their businesses, so they shouldn't be desiccated. There is no end to the number of ways to design qualified content. Marketing activities have to be held assiduously. Brands have a variety of notions about SM management. SM accounts should contain

precise information regarding the hotel and the brand they represent as well. All contents –pictures, videos, or writings ought to reflect the hotel’s and the brand’s standards. For instance, an exclusive promotion for a suit room cannot be stated without a caption. The room’s picture including discounted price is not being considered professional in today’s digital world. A little brief, not convoluted detail about that promotion could be more suitable. However, what truly matters, in that case, is the utmost level of professionalism regarding brand standards since SM posts have to correspond to the hotel.

Aforementioned, hoteliers have taken SM to be the ultimate tool for marketing since the digital age being transformed entirely. A lot of firms are aware of this phenomenon. What is more, the fostering and developing side of this tool carries significance. Marketing is essential for publication and reputation, and SM is one of the crucial instruments for that process. It has been remarked that a well-managed SM account requires being updated; otherwise, it is specious for publicity and most important; potential sales activities. Some, especially not so corporate, firms do not construe or repudiate the value of the SM and prefer not enough to invest in those platforms and eventually negligibly benefited from them. Others get auspicious sustainable marketing tools that work continuously. Functions of digital marketing were both complex and recondite 10 years ago but not anymore. Top companies have marketing and sales functions replete with the latest technology in all well-known SM platforms since their success is contingent upon those platforms.

The contents of SM are sufficient to mark their brand as reliable; so those concepts of content should be outlined and delineated by hoteliers. Managers are aware that their SM platforms are not in a vacuum; contents affect their brands to a great extent. Organizational culture is not an instance, but a continuum where every single function carries great importance. SM platforms’ efficiency depends upon the quality of their content and the level of interactions that occurred.

During an event, participants and guests are tending to share their experiences and thoughts on SM with their locational information, so it is another opportunity for hoteliers to observe the interactions. Likes, comments, and shares on the content being posted are important factors in that regard.

Consequently, this research contributes to the marketing and hospitality management literature in different manners.

Limitations of the Study

This study has many scientific contributions to the subjects of social media management in international hotels. Nonetheless, there are some limitations, and the foremost is collecting the data from the sample elucidated. In order to contribute to academia proficiently, interviews have been set up with middle or upper levels of management. Besides, international hotels may have some serious strict policies for participating in such academic studies, whereat those circumstances are the preeminent limitations of this research.

Suggestions for Future Research

As maintained previously, this paper shed light on international hotels’ operations and the brand standards they are pertinent to. For future research, examining local and national wide brands’ management procedures regarding SM would be interesting for the field of social science and

hospitality. However, to contribute to the field and expand our horizons, examining resort hotels' standards instead of city hotels would be also beneficial for us –academicians. As underlined in that paper, city hotels' SM accounts may focus on outlets; bars, health clubs, or restaurants because their marketing shares' majorities are the yield of business-related operations. City hotels are addressing those market segments, whereas high-class resort hotels, of course, welcome vastly prestigious guests. However, hotels in Ankara periodically serve international business people, diplomats, ambassadors, and even national presidents. That means there's a more competitive climate for group sales. Formal procedures are being significantly taken cognizance of according to the interviews. However, for coastal or mountain hotels, the main focuses are, for example, comfortable staying and quality of activities, more than the size of meeting rooms or technicality they offer for conferences. Hotel facilities and operations make resort hotels possible to promote their rooms more actively. In the light of the information above, researchers may be also interested in local or small hotel operations' SM management procedures.

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