Aristotle University Thessaloniki

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

Faculty of Economic and Political Sciences

MA in Digital Media, Communication & Journalism

Title: Hospitality on the digital era: How social media promote branding

Student: Trokou Paschalia

Supervisor: Tsourvakas George

May 2021
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................. 3

Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 4

PART I. Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 6

1. The “world” of Social Media .......................................................................................................... 6
   1.1 Characteristics of Social Media ................................................................................................. 6
       1.1.1 Types of Social Media ......................................................................................................... 8
       1.1.2 Facebook .......................................................................................................................... 9
       1.1.3 Instagram ........................................................................................................................ 10
   1.2 Social Media Marketing (SMM) ............................................................................................... 12
       1.2.1 The principles of social media marketing ............................................................................ 15
       1.2.2 Social Media Marketing Strategies ................................................................................... 16
   1.3 Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) ....................................................................................... 18
   1.4 User Generated Content (UGC) .............................................................................................. 20

2. Branding .......................................................................................................................................... 22
   2.1 Characteristics of branding ....................................................................................................... 22
   2.2 Brand Loyalty through the brand community ......................................................................... 26
   2.3 Branding on social media ......................................................................................................... 29

3. Hospitality and Marketing ............................................................................................................. 32
   3.1 Online Marketing ..................................................................................................................... 32
   3.2 Hospitality ............................................................................................................................. 34

PART II: The research ......................................................................................................................... 38

1. Methodology ................................................................................................................................... 38

2. Results ............................................................................................................................................ 40

3. Discussion of the findings .............................................................................................................. 47

4. Limitations and suggestions for future research ........................................................................... 50

Conclusion .......................................................................................................................................... 51

References .......................................................................................................................................... 52
Abstract

The new era of technology and Internet has changed entirely the tourism industry. Especially, the hospitality field faces new opportunities and challenges in order to promote their business and provide better or new services to their guests. On the other hand, social media is a new aspect of the daily life, even for the big industries. Nowadays, they use this powerful tool not only to advertise their product or service, but also to communicate with their clients. Another important factor is the branding. Branding refers to the way customers perceive the product or service provided to them. All the feelings, the images, the thoughts that they have in their mind when they listen the brand - name of a company. Moreover, it is related to the promise that a company makes through the products or services it provides to the world, to its customers, existing or potential. In hospitality, the relationship with the guests is really important. Hoteliers do not only provide accommodation, but a variety of experiences too. So, they attend to create a bond with them. This bond can be supported also, through the social media strategies. Through these platforms, the hotels can build upon the guests’ relationship, strengthen the hotel’s reputation and create content, that will help them to be connected with their users - clients. The purpose of this dissertation is to research the strategies that hospitality industry and more specific hotels, use in social media platforms. Especially, we focused on the possible ways that these strategies help them to increase their brand name. We conducted a content analysis on 5 luxury hotels on Greece. We analyzed their Facebook and Instagram posts for the five months of their high season. The results showed us that there are different strategies that can be followed in order the hotel build its brand reputation through social media. The most important results were that user generated content can lead easily on that direction as well as the engagement and reactions of the hotel brand to users’ posts and comments. Moreover, Instagram seems to be the appropriate social media platform for a hotel to achieve its goals and build a loyal brand community.
Introduction

Our society and business are transformed because of the technological evolution. Digital platforms, such as social media, have changed the manner by which consumers cooperate and interact with the brands. Therefore, social media have become an essential piece of our everyday life for communicating and sharing information. Through them, the behavior of the customers has changed, and the companies must react on that (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Now, consumers are more active on creating marketing content about their favorite products or brands.

Social media was created by the dramatic expansion of the Internet and the applications. Companies and industries around the world are included social media on their marketing strategies. Social media has numerous advantages for a company, including viral potential, cost, and the creation of brand reputation. Marketing products or services using social media has expanded, and this rise in use has pulled in numerous companies to follow this scheme. Subsequently, social media seems as a powerful tool for any industry for their future plans and new techniques have already begun planning on the most proficient level to actualize it (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011). Companies have even hired specialized staff to engage with the customers online and manage social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, etc. This strategy permits companies to keep in contact with their clients.

On the other hand, travel industry communication is one of the largest industries on the world. It can understand human’s desires and give the opportunity for new experiences, a pause from the problems of daily life. The power of the Internet changes the travel industry into a path of material with worldwide results. Through the Internet, travelers can create any kind of material they want. So, hotels can create their brand profiles and communicate with their audience. Although, this is not enough as they have to take into consideration the point of view of the customer. This will help them to deal with competition.

The special characteristic of tourism is the intangibility of the services and the only way to measure and evaluate it is after the consumption. So, marketers adopt social media as a method to learn more about customers’ opinion and open a discussion with them in order to improve some of the services or add new. A brand that respects and
listen its community will lead them more easily on loyalty. The customers will be loyal to the brand and more customers will come because of this.

The aim of this thesis is to understand if there is connection between the branding and social media and more specific how the hotels can use it on that direction. So, apart from the existence of this relationship, we want to detect the techniques in order to succeed branding. So, our research questions are the following:

- Can the social media be used for creating a brand name?
- Do social media increase brand recognition?
- Which methods can be used by hoteliers for that purpose?

In order to answer to these questions, we decide to analyze the social media profiles of five luxurious hotels of Greece. We chose the platforms of Facebook and Instagram and the time period was from May until September 2020. The hotels that have been chosen are: Sani Resort, Costa Navarino, Divani Caravel Athens, Katikies Santorini and Nissaki Boutique Hotel Mykonos.

The current thesis is divided in two parts. The first one has to do with the Literature review. First, we present the basic characteristic of social media and the techniques that have been followed on social media marketing. Secondly, we analyzed the meaning of brand and the correlation with the social media. Thirdly, we analyze the adjustment of social media on hospitality industry and the special characteristics of these connection. The second part of the thesis belongs to our research. First of all, we analyze the methodology of the research. The next chapter is about the result of the research. On the third chapter, there is a discussion about the results and the outcome of them. Finally, there are the limitations of the current research and the conclusion of entire thesis.
PART I. Literature Review

1. The “world” of Social Media

1.1 Characteristics of Social Media

Social media can be characterized as a group of applications based on Internet that “built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and permit the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The communication shifts between different social media platforms from just “visiting” other users’ profiles, to chatting with them. Moreover, there can be differentiation in the content is used. That can be text, photos and videos (Khataibeh and Azzazi, 2019, Paquette, 2013).

The social media platforms have many advantages. First of all, people from all over the world can communicate with each other, regardless their location and share their ideas and interests. Secondly, they can share their material instantly. Thirdly, on that platforms, users can invest time on entertain themselves. Fourthly, when marketers use social media platforms target their audience according to the content they upload. And, lastly, these platforms provide connections between business and job seekers (Khataibeh and Azzazi, 2019).

However, there are some disadvantages too. One of that is the spread of false information. The quantity of information that is uploaded every day is countless, so a percentage of them is fake news. Cyber bulling is another disadvantage. This phenomenon is usually happening between kids, who post improper things and harass each over. Apart from that, on social media there is the possibility of fraud or identity theft. A lot of users make the mistake to upload personal data and be exposed to hackers and trackers, who can use these data in harmful way. Another issue that social media mentioned is the invasion of copyrights. There is open access to the material users upload and other users “steal” it, without asking a permission to use it. Last but not least, people spent more time day by day on social media, in the terms that can be addicted to them (Khataibeh and Azzazi, 2019).

A more philosophical idea of social media is that it permits users to have internet access to share, edit and upload web content. This idea comes from community, as users
can interactive, work together and share with others in real time without the limit of location or time. As O’Reilly (2005) mentions the internet is source for participation, a channel driven from its users. This model means that collective power and collective intelligence lead business. At the end, content turns out to be clearer and impressive (Lange-Faria and Elliot, 2012).

The most experts agree that all the relationships, personal and business, are built on trust. Social media upgrade this value by offering a “place” for clients to be heard. Clients want to be heard, understood and appreciated and this not only happens in social media, but it empowers it. When social media is used properly, this makes the idea of transactional marketing old. And this is how a new relationship begins. So, clients have a new channel to communicate with the brand. The client can frequently give a feedback to the firm about particular products or services. (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012). Feedbacks may include general thoughts about the brand, feelings and experiences during the use of the product or service, comfort with purchasing process and feelings and opinions about the use of firms’ website. The feedbacks are really important for marketers because through them they can understand if the firm fulfils the consumers’ expectations (Celine, 2012)

Besides the use of social media for uploading pictures and status updates, users have discovered that social media gives them power when it has to do with the flow of information (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012). Social media manage to change the online consumer behavior, which is really important for firms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Both sides are depending on each other more day by day for the information and clients influence the brands they connect with (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011).

Social media demands research to identify which approach is better for a brand and the promise to connect with the audience that is important to support it. It requires commitment, recourses and incorporation with all the parts of the organization and a strategy. Before, a company enter in the social media arena, it must decide the proper objectives related with the social media implementation. It needs to recognize and understand the value of the client, not just the company. Social media has to do with engagement and collaboration (Andzulis, Panagopoulos and Rapp, 2012).
1.1.1 Types of Social Media

For the categorization of the social media platforms, we used the one from Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). So, according to them, the basic types of social media are the following:

**Blogs:** Blogs are websites that permit bloggers to keep logs, share their experiences such as ideas in specific topic and communicate with the readers through their comments (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). They can use text, pictures or videos. Subcategory of blogs are the micro-blogs, which are the same as blogs, but with the difference that the content is only text and there is limitation on the number of characters (eg. Twitter) (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

**Social Networking Sites:** The social network sites are platforms where people participate though virtual profiles, “meet” new people, communicate and develop relationships with people whom they may or may not know in real life. Some of these platforms developed with a specific orientation and for a specific group of people. While, social network cites are considered as a category of social media, some authors consider them as one, with the difference that some of them provide the ability of sharing photo or video (eg. Facebook) (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

**Virtual Worlds:** Virtual worlds are online applications that present reality in a 3D environment. Users are represented by a picture or a human-line character and they can create and have their own things or communicate with other users on the virtual world as long as the rules of the game allow them (eg. World of Warcraft) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

**Collaborative Projects:** These sites are based on the content that users upload. There are two types of these websites: wikis and social bookmarking sites. Wikis are sites with quality content open accessed to everyone for edition. In this environment, users can interact with each other during the content modification. On the other hand, social bookmarking sites help people to manage and save collections of links. These bookmarks can be shared to other users (eg. Wikipedia) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). There is a term, social tagging, that is confused with bookmarking. Tag is a technique that is used for bookmarking. Specifically, tags link to the sites where the users usually use to save their photos, audio and videos (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

**Content Community Sites:** These sites are designed for sharing material and tools changed from previous work or from those who upload the material. This material
can be photos, pictures, videos or presentations. Although, these sites are different from social networking sites because it is not necessary for users to have a profile in order to use the material (eg. Youtube) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

**Sites Dedicated for Feedback:** These websites allow users to upload their own posts, to read, discuss and share comments, reviews, experiences and thoughts about countless themes. Two are the most popular forms of these sites: the online forums and websites dedicated for product reviews (eg. Trip Advisor) (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

1.1.2. Facebook

Facebook was established in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg, with the mission to enable people to share and make the world more open and connected. Until the October of 2020, the monthly active users were 2,70 billion, which makes it the most popular social media platform. It is translated in 101 different languages (Aslam, 2020) Facebook is considered as one of the most visited sites according to Google. Its audience is highly participatory. It is considered as the dominate social media application for marketing and advertising. Specifically, 94% of marketers use it as the major key to their marketing plan (Social Media Marketer, 2020).

Facebook offers to organizations and companies a variety of tools to connect with the targeted audience and encourage positive connections between them and the brand. Firms can create a Facebook page without cost. This “page” is a site to communicate with fans, “meet” possible clients and build a community. Users and brands participate to that conversation through posts and comments. In these pages, a variety of material can be uploaded such as text, photos, audio and videos (Bradbury, 2011).

Apart from that, Facebook provides free analytics tools for the page owners. Through these analytics, marketers can have access to demographical data, traffic rates, user engagement and advices to improvement. Nowadays, the Facebook has become a necessity for business and social media marketing. Consumers use Facebook for
everything and especially if they want to find information about a product or service and of course they trust Facebook to interact with the brand (Bradbury, 2011).

Another element of Facebook is the Newsfeed. It is a “place” where brands choose to show their advertisements on targeted audiences by paying the appropriate fee. Actually, there are 40 to 150 times more possible users to consume content from brands in the Newsfeed than to visit the brand’s page (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich and Bruich, 2012).

There are two categories of possible audiences for branded content on Facebook. The first is the fans of brands on Facebook (those who already “liked” the brand’s page) and second the friends of that fans. In this situation, they are a larger number of consumers and can see much more brand’s advertisements than the first category. However, it is important to mention the “value of a fan” and why is it important. First of all, it increases the depth of engagement and loyalty among fans. Secondly, it produces an incremental purchase behavior and thirdly, utilize the ability to impact friends of fans (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich and Bruich, 2012).

In Facebook, hotels do not need a profile but a page because they act like a brand. On this platform, the hotel should know about their audience and “build” the page by taking into consideration their demographic characteristics. Demographics can be used as a powerful tool in order to set up Facebook campaigns and produce content close to their characteristics. With right exposure of the content, awareness and inspiration the followers of the brand can be increased (Lim, 2010).

1.1.3 Instagram

Instagram has become a daily habit for more than 3 million people. It is a social media platform which was launched on October, 6, 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. It is based on photo-taking and photo-sharing and started as a mobile application. On January 2011, Instagram added hashtags in order to help the users to find photos from other users. Hashtag can be described as a word or a phrase without spaces and the sign (#) in the beginning, which discover messages on a particular theme. After, the Instagram added Direct on December 2013, which allow users to send their
photos direct to their friends though message. Hence, the Instagram has become a different and new way for people to communicate and interact with each other (Ha, 2015).

Instagram is one of the most successful social media platforms for marketers. 67% of marketers are using Instagram and they plan to extent their activity over the next year (Social Media Marketer, 2020). More than 200 million users visit the business profiles that they manage every day. Arranging the content is the significant key to success in this platform. The material should be arranged frequently and consistently. Many marketers use a photo calendar to schedule the posts (Undey, Koroglu and Duran, 2019). One of the most successful method of marketers is the use of hashtags on the posts. They ask from users to comment, tag their friends and make a photo reply. Picking the appropriate hashtag can make the content successful. Hashtags have a major impact on the interaction rates of shared content and can choose whether the posts will contact the targeted audience (Undey, Koroglu and Duran, 2019).

When a company is not known to consumers, embracing possible clients on Instagram may be one of many marketing tools for developing and increasing awareness for company and its service and creating connections with followers. Apart from that, it is popular because of its characteristics and the growing number of its users (Virtanen, Björk and Sjöström, 2017). It provides the companies the ability of a visual storytelling, which is depend on the idea of sharing with fast reaction. For example, a company shares a post and users react fast by liking it or commenting on it or the company (Miles, 2014). Miles (2014) suggests that the companies should increase their followers in relation to the size of the company, because users will follow more easily famous brands than those that they are not popular.

If one of the marketing objectives is to co-create with the clients and to increase the brand involvement, investing in Instagram is the suitable platform to achieve them. In contrast with other social media platforms, Instagram has a higher level of usage for connection (Krallman, Pelletier and Adams, 2016). In this platform, the target audience for following, liking and commenting is the current clients, with the scope to change over them into followers. In order to identify them, hashtags related to the company or its product or service is used (Virtanen, Björk and Sjöström, 2017).

Instagram is considered as one of the most appropriate platforms for hospitality in order to communicate with the customers and create relationships with them. This social media platform helps the hoteliers to learn more about their clients, interact with
them and enlighten them with information through social media (Undey, Koroglu and Duran, 2019). The ubiquity of Instagram among other platforms expands each spending day, sharing clients’ own experiences and other clients’ experiences and hotels’ experience make clients partners with sellers in the value-added process (Sashi, 2012).

1.2 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social Media Marketing (SMM) can be characterized as the act of using social networks, online networks, blogs and any other internet type of media for marketing. With that term can be described all the tools and applications that give the Web its social abilities. Examples of these tools can be the Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube. The main purpose of social media marketing is to increase brand awareness and interaction between the consumers and the brand. However, more of SMM’s goals are increasement of sales, consumers’ education and information, improvement of customer service and monitoring of brand reputation. SMM gives visibility and awareness for a brand. This awareness is related with the conversion of possible consumers to faithful clients at the end. In order to succeed that, the marketers have to create a thematic content that can prompt a successful marketing campaign. This content will create brand awareness will be at the top of consumers’ thoughts in the case they choose to buy a product or service (Lim, 2010).

In short amount of time, marketers have used social media marketing for a variety of procedures, such us, branding, research, customer relationship, sales and advertising. Among all these, the branding seems to be the most important for them related to social media. 86% of marketers mentioned that social media marketing has succeed more exposure for their companies. Moreover, the positive results have been increased the last six years (Social Media Marketer, 2020). Social media campaigns focused on brands give extra touchpoints for the collaboration between the customer and the brand, which can help to permeate further to their relationship and convince consumers to engage with online content. Perceptions, thoughts, feelings, images and experiences from these touchpoints structure the brand in customer’s memory. The options that marketers have through social media are plenty, such as advertisements,
participation on social networks as a brand persona, development of brand participation and creation of brand content. Firms use social media marketing as an incorporated tool which helps them to design the digital image of the brand (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Clients have access to plethora of brand messages on social media, so they filtered out the content and reject whatever it is not related to them. For that reason, the marketers should present relevant and fresh content, if they want their strategic plan to succeed. Another factor is the popularity of these platforms and the content among friends, which means that everybody has access on it. Hence, the marketers should focus on the target audience and analyze it in order to use the most suitable and effective sites. Last but not least is the fact that a mobile app will help them to succeed their goal too (Erdoğmuş and Cicek, 2012)

The basic advantage of social media marketing is the increase of brand exposure. Brand exposure happens when the consumer finds out about a product, service or advertisement through at least one of their five senses, regardless of they are focused on it. Through social media sites, new brands can build up themselves and foster awareness. For those which already exists, social media can raise their awareness. The huge variety of social media platforms and the Word-of-Mouth (WOM) help to increase brand’s visibility. Moreover, firms can use social media marketing to build their brand reputation and improve their popularity (Celine, 2012).

A new page and profile on social media will give the chance to the brands to be seen and reached by its crowd. Exposure is the first step for new brands. Without it, the firms will simply fail. The social media profile of the firm gives the chance to show their products and services interactively. The client will have the choice of reading or not products’ description, watch photos and videos and see reviews and comments about their products (Celine, 2012).

One of the first goals of social media marketing is to build brand awareness through the development of online presence of the brand. When a brand uses social media for that purpose, there are social metrics that can help to measure the effects of that. The most important metrics in this field are social media exposure, influence and engagement (Nichole, 2010).

Social media Exposure metrics show the number of individuals can be reached with a message or attracted to the brand via social media. They include the quantity of clicks, views, fans, followers, subscribers or brand mentions. These metrics can be really difficult to be tracked, because usually it has to be done manually and it is
difficult to separate the new users from duplication. The influence metrics are essentially focus on the impact of engagement metrics. They are more abstract and rely upon the firm’s point of view of positive, impartial or negative effects. They represent the share of voice, opinion and the top influencers report. In that case, automated tool can be used, but in every case, manual control will be needed. The engagement is related with the number of individuals who thought about the message and did something with it. The number of clicks, retweets, shares, replies, posts and comments will be measured, that is why a big number of tools can be used (Celine, 2012).

Brand awareness is the basic stage of the customer relationship. In this first step, the user sees the brand exposure. This step can be very successful through the social media marketing, in which a post can reveal the brand into the consumer and inform him that is active and he can learn more about the product or service. The exposure can help them move on the consideration and purchase. Finally, consumers develop loyalty for the brand and they buy regularly (Celine, 2012).

One of the most important things for digital marketing is the design of a social media presence in order to expand the brand’s online exposure. Moreover, social media signals have started to considered as important as organic rankings. The social media optimization can help improve the search engine optimization. It is pretty sure that the brands do not have the properly exposure, they should have. That creates a gab that marketers have to fill not only through their work, but also through the numerous social media by built brand awareness (Celine, 2012).

Social media are considered as a huge target base in which marketers can promote their products and services online. So, social media marketing has become a very powerful tool to lead targeted traffic to the firms’ sites and blogs. Moreover, Search Engine Optimization has an important role in a website traffic, but social media has opened numerous paths of online traffic. Surely, social media sites provide new pathways to business people to be connected with new audiences. The more channels a firm uses, the more clicks from interested users will come to their website. This procedure is called targeted traffic and it refers to the point that the audience sees an ad about a brand’s product or service and they are clicking to the brand’s website link in order to buy the product or to learn more about that (Celine, 2012).
1.2.1 The principles of social media marketing

According to Perdue (2010), there are four principles that define the social media marketing. These principles are related to community, content, conversation and transparency. Each of them, are very important to the effectiveness of the strategy. The conversation makes them social. The transparency makes the conversation helpful. The content is the major element of social media as well as the community, which makes the content pertinent.

1. **Prioritizing the community.** A firm should focus its online strategy on communities. There are numerous features to this rule with the main aspect being that social media marketing is about connecting with groups of people, not “bomb” them with advertisements. Moreover, a firm is more possible to succeed by focusing on a specific community instead of general groups on the Internet. Rather that finding existing communities, a firm can also create an online community around its products, services or even itself.

2. **Uploading content in communities.** A firm has to be a publisher in social media. Hence, they need to deal with the challenge of choosing the content, its purpose and its forms. However, the firms always have to remember that they use the content in order to communicate with their community, to establish collaboration with them, to educate them and to entertain them. Besides, a firm should invest into creative content. This is really important because the firms want to have people’ interest and spikes them to share it with their friends. If the content does not fulfil this purpose, it will be boring and people will ignore it.

3. **Being part of communities via content.** This is related with the conversation and it means that the firm is a member of social media too. Social media is interactive and so a firm should follow and be part on online conversations and be engaged with the online communities related to them. This communication does not mean publicity and promotion. It means that the firms provide the necessary information, answer the users’ questions, comment to their post and post valuable advises.
4. **Transparency on communities.** If a firm wants to be part of an online community, it has to be transparent. In this field, the standards are different. The firms have to be authentic and act with altruism. Through this, they will be able to build sincere relationships online, which can be evolved offline. All the online deals have to be transparent. The firms, which will not be faithful, they will end up on the sidelines, as their online communities will think that they have been lied to. These principles must be followed regardless the type or the level of interaction a firm chooses. For a successful social media marketing plan, the firms have to be part on online communities, to create authentic and attractive material, be part of online conversations and being transparent all through its online activity (Perdue, 2010).

1.2.2 **Social Media Marketing Strategies**

The benefits of the social media are plenty, but it is really important for companies to understand why they use them and what is the most successful way.

First of all, the firms should realize that the era has changed. Today, we speak about the age of consumer satisfaction. The consumers want more, but they do not want to be treated only as a source of money. They want interaction. So, social media can help on that direction. So, on one hand, they can help firms to meet their audience and listen their feedback, on the other hand they can use their opinion in order to improve the product or develop a new one (Neti, 2011).

Secondly, companies need to understand that social media marketing is not working as a mass advertisement. The marketers have to identify the group they want to interact with and create ads for that group. Social media can help in targeting influencers and through them to guide the users to be customer of the company. Another obstacle that it needs to be overtaken is the multitasking of users. Today, a user uses three different screens. While he is watching a movie on Netflix, he is scrolling down his Facebook page on his smartphone and he is writing about his travel experience on his blog. So, if the marketers want to have his attention on their ads, they must use fresh and fascinating content.
Thirdly, the message does not only have to be interesting, but to call into action. A post or an online advertisement needs to contain all the necessary information, a user will need about the product or the service, in order to move to the next phase and buy it or maybe to suggest it to his friends. Apart from that, the post must contain a link towards to the product’s website and the user should the least effort to have it (Neti, 2011).

Fourthly, as we mention above, the social media can be used to increase the customer loyalty. This can be happened by customer service support, which eventually will lead to client maintenance. Besides that, social media can be used as a response to the negative publicity.

Fifthly, the bookmarking sites. Through these platforms, the firms can have a look to their possible clients. Microblogging is used by users to discuss their daily life, their habits and share information. Firms should take advantage of this in order to analyze the connection between users and their intentions (Alharbie, 2015).

Social media marketing can be a really good technique for a business to find out what others think about its product or service without spending a lot of money. So, in case that the product does not have the appropriate acceptance from the consumers, the firms will know first and they will make changes.

Social media marketing is a powerful tool that can change the image of a company. However, there are some points that marketers should take into consideration. Initially, it is not an easy project and really good research and preparation should be done, before its implementation. Marketers should not except results in one day. It is a strategy that it needs time to fulfil the company’s goals. Apart from that, social media marketing works better if it is a part of a bigger marketing plan. This is the reason why the firms have to think what they want to succeed and decide the part of social media in this plan. One of the advantages of this tool is that can be customized according to the needs of the company. The firms can decide to focus on the platforms that seem to offer the best return of investment, while they follow the observer role for the others (Neti, 2011).
1.3 Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

The intensity of WOM was not perceived as far back in times as Aristotle, however has been appeared to impact consumer behavior, perspectives, goals, awareness, desires and recognitions. Studies have proven that WOM can be nine times as effective as advertisements in changing the customer impression of an item or service. Arndt (1967), the first who examine consumer behavior in the context of WOM, characterized it as oral, person to person communication between the receiver and the communicator whom the receiver sees as non-commercial, in regards to a brand, product or service (Lange-Faria and Elliot, 2012). A basic guideline of consumer behavior is that consumers can apply incredible impact upon each other. For that reason, marketers try to control interpersonal influence (Haywood, 1989). Word-Of-Mouth is the correspondence between customers about an item, service, or an organization wherein the sources are viewed as autonomous of commercial influence (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008).

On the one hand, positive WOM expands desires and it makes considerably harder to fulfill these desires. On the other hand, negative WOM can have an important impact upon a company’s image, as disappointed guests spread unflattering comments related to their experience. A study at the Caribbean suggested that when local people show unfriendly feelings towards travelers, the outcome is a negative WOM and a possible decrease in the business (Cricks, 2003). Accordingly, a study on the USA by Litvin, Blose and Laird (2004) noticed that travelers’ restaurant choices were prevalently impacted by the WOM suggestions of opinion leaders, with the minority of those choices to be influenced from formal media (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth can be defined as all informal communications directed at consumers through the Internet technology related to the use or the characteristic of specific goods and services or their dealers. This situation demands communication between the sellers and the clients just as among clients themselves. Both of them, are necessary parts of the WOM stream and both separated from mass media’s communication (Goldsmith, 2006). E-WOM exists in online space which can be accessed, connected and searched. The clients are depending increasingly more on the search engines to find travel information. An analytical model was developed by
Mayzlin (2006) to inspect the validity of E-WOM, which can be a combination of buyer suggestions and hidden firm promotions. She found that consumer WOM can be influential despite the obvious promotional goal by companies in these online settings. WOM and E-WOM can be both considered as marketing tools and marketing outcomes. As marketing tool, they are really powerful in affecting consumers’ attitudes, evaluation of products and services, client loyalty, expectations and choices (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008). In general, previous studies show that WOM and E-WOM are more persuasive than the regular marketing tool. Then again, WOM and E-WOM are likewise considered as one of the key marketing outcomes, which are as significant as customer loyalty (Leung, Bai and Stahura, 2015).

Companies should have brand presence on a variety of social media platforms to increase their customer list. The exposure to E-WOM messages can create bigger interest in a product or service than the information that have been given by marketers (Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury, 2011). Nowadays, the people are more aware of the products they consume due to World Wide Web, which gives them access to data that they did not have before. With this way, they can be co-producers of the value of the product. By embracing this new role, the consumers are able to provide to the firms a large amount of return on investment. This helps brand awareness to be increased and E-WOM to be considered as an important tool in modern marketing world. Social media sites, such as Facebook, allow to consumers to be those who sent the message, by sharing the advertisements with their friends, commenting on them and passing these comments along viral channels (Zhang, Jansen, and Chowdhury, 2011).

An example of E-WOM is the online reviews. A study by Trusov, Bucklin and Pauwels (2009) give a solid motivation to use the E-WOM channels of communication as the online reviews provide a trustworthy source of data about a product or service. The data produced on social media and in online reviews should be seen as new chances to comprehend and react to the clients’ necessities. Online reviews provide information and input to improving the service system and the nature of travel experience. If the travel industry assembles, investigates and manages this data appropriately, then they can improve the adequacy of their marketing and management capacities (Sotiriadis, 2017).

Furthermore, E-WOM has change the structure and the availability of travel data, and of course the users’ information and impression of various travel products and services (Litvin, Goldsmith and Pan, 2008). Moreover, the creation and management
of hotel brand online is really important for hotels in order to invigorate and oversee E-WOM on social media platforms. The social media experience indirectly affects booking intention and the aim of E-WOM, reinforcing the significance of social media experience in social media marketing. Clients tend to have positive attitudes towards social media and hotel brand, when they enjoy the experience on the social media. Accordingly, this increases their intention to book and spread positive E-WOM on social media platforms (Leung, Bai and Stahura, 2015). The significant elements that drive clients’ booking plan and E-WOM is not the social media platform, a hotel choose to use, but how the clients fell for their experience on that platform. So, it is irrelevant if a hotel uses Facebook or Instagram as a marketing tool, but the managers have to focus on the social media experience they provide to the users and the brand building through them. Take into consideration of this, social media marketing becomes easier for hotel, because they can follow the same strategy for all the social media platforms. So, according to that, the hotel’s clients believe of the positive relation between the hotel brand and the social media experience (Leung, Bai and Stahura, 2015).

1.4 User Generated Content (UGC)

One of the new elements that social media introduce to the users is the content that can be produced by the users themselves. This new ability helps them to share their opinion in the public sphere of social media and receive feedback for that. Apart from that, they realize that this material that they produce and upload on the social media can help them to connect with other users who share the same interests regardless of the location of each one.

As the Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), describe the user generated content is the amount of all the ways in which people use the social media platforms generally applied to depict the different types of media content that are accessible and made by users. In general, it is the way that users collaborate and share ideas. Examples of this kind of content can be photos, videos and blogs. So, it is really important to understand that UGC is a tool for the marketers that helps them to define a brand. Furthermore, firms
have to understand the necessity of creating their own image on social media. By this, they can manage a part of the brand marketing and at the same time to remain informed about the content generated by their own consumers/users about their brand. Companies cannot straightforwardly control the consumers messages, but they are able to influence their discussions related to the brand (Mangold and Faulds, 2009).

Nowadays, the user generated content is considered as a source of trustworthy information on the travel industry. A research from Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, and Buultjens (2009) suggested that UGC is credible since they are the real experience revealed by real people. Although, this kind of material can be problematic on the grounds that it could be posted by someone with personal or professional interests (Leung, 2013). According to Yoo and Gretzel (2010) the most important indicators of trust in travel related material are the expertise and dependability of UGC creators. Additionally, the age and the frequency of the users are related with the trust of the UGC. Moreover, various researches suggest that travelers consider UGC as more dependable than the information that is given from the traditional marketers (Fotis, Rossides and Buhalis, 2010; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). These marketers ruled the blogs and the social networking sites on the past. However, social media is turning into the essential medium by which travel information can be shared. For example, if someone searches for “accommodation” and “transportation” on the web, results from social media will appear to them (Xiang and Pan, 2011).

The dependability, subjectivity and validity of UGC are consistently effective. The UGC is considered as recommendations given by family members, friends or others with the same ideas. For that reason, it is becoming an essential information source to possible clients and it is viewed as more reliable than information given from a service provider (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014). The validity of UGC will determine the impact upon travelers’ choice as well as in their use of social media. This validity can be affected by the previous information users may have of the UGC’s creator, the users’ traveling involvement and experience in the use of social media. Thus, it is significant that online platforms are considered as both dependable and containing quality content in order to attract more clients. Around to this point, it is recognized critical generational contrasts. The impact of these UGC is higher on the younger generation of users in addition to the older ones. Another research recommended that young users will share their UGC on their own social media profiles than on commercial site (Zeng and Gerritsen, 2014).
Previous researches have shown that consumers tent to take into consideration the UGC because they feel that the information, they learn from other users about brands is closer to their needs, preferences and experiences (Arazy, Kumar, and Shapira, 2010; Goh, Heng, and Lin, 2013). Goh et al. (2013) proposes that customers not just react to the data of online material, yet additionally factor the sources of this material into thought. This provides a chance for a better comprehension of the value of the content that is uploaded on the social media. Communication with clients through different social media platforms is going to help the firms to possess knowledge about their clients’ preferences. As a result, they will offer new products or services according to those preferences. So, apart from that beneficial role that social media can have on that field, they can also, be a significant element as a tool for training and interior communication within the firm (Leung, Law, Van Hoof, and Buhalis, 2013).

2. Branding

2.1 Characteristics of branding

A brand can be a name, a term, a sign or a symbol that identifies a company’s product or service as different from other companies’ product. Brand can be characterized as a mix of separating notions that connect on an emotional level with the desired markets. A brand can influence the thinking process and the emotional reactions of consumers (Alharbie, 2015). Branding is not only related with the managing of the brands, but is a constant battle among the producers and consumers to define that promise and meaning (Healey, 2008). According to Healey (2008) there are five segments in branding: client relationship, storytelling, positioning design and price. Nowadays with the digital marketing and the social media, branding faces new challenges with innovative techniques which make it more successful than before (Odhiambo and Adhiambo, 2012).

Brand name, brand mark, and trademark are crucial terms on the designing of a brand. The brand name should be easy to pronounce and to remember. Moreover, it should be translated into the other languages easily (Demirçiftçi and Kızılirmak, 2016).
When a brand name comes to mind, the customers create emotional responses depend on the perceived quality or refinement of the brand. This feeling effects further the customers’ future brand consumption (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009). The brand mark and the trademark should be legally vested (Demirciftci and Kizilirmak, 2016).

It is really significant how the customers experience the brand. An experience can be a sensation, feeling, cognition and social reactions evokes by brand related incentives. An experience with a brand can be more intense than others and can be differ in strength. Likewise, it varies in valence. Some of them can be positive or negative. Besides, some experiences can happen to consumer occasionally, with short time and others happen intentionally and last more. The long-lasting experiences stored in the clients’ memory and influence customer satisfaction and loyalty (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009).

Brand experience varies from evaluative, emotional, and associative constructs, such as brand attitudes, brand involvement, brand attachment, customer delight and brand personality. Experience may cause general evaluations and attitudes, particularly assessments of the actual experience. Moreover, the general demeanor toward the experience catches just a little piece of the whole brand insight. Involvement depends on requirements, qualities, and interests that inspire a customer toward an item. Brand experience doesn't assume a persuasive state. Experiences can happen even when buyers don't show interest in or have an individual association with the brand. In addition, brands that buyers are exceptionally associated with, are not really brands that cause the strongest experience. Brand attachment refers to a strong emotional bond between the clients and the brand as proven by its three dimensions – affection, passion and connection. Customer delight is portrayed by excitement and positive effect. It can be characterized as the emotional ingredient of satisfaction (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009). Lastly, according to Aaker (1997), brand personality has five dimensions - sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. It depends on inferential cycles, which means that clients are not honest or fan of the brand, they are mirror these characteristics into brand.

There are four qualitative characteristics that companies consider a great brand should have according to Barwise and Meehan (2010). Firstly, the consumer guarantee. The brand promise should be relevant to the social media message and comprehensible. Secondly, the brand should fulfill that promise and build trust with the customers
through this. Thirdly, the greatest advantage of social media presence is that the brand can be improved through the comments of users. So, it is necessary for the company to “listen” its community and try to improve its product or service. Lastly, the brand should consider social media as an opportunity of new and fresh ideas. It should try new and innovative ideas, which will gain the interest of the online brand community (Barwise and Meehan, 2010).

A brand uses the marketing strategies in order to communicate its values, vision and character. These messages add to the foundation of a brand image in the customer’s symbolism. In these messages are used language, pictures, colors and design in order to build up a solid relationship between emotions and perceptions about the brand and self-ideas and character that a guest could have (Pereira, Correia and Schutz, 2012).

In the world of social media, the role of creativity and imagination is really crucial if the marketers want their brand to leave a mark. There are different techniques to make branding on social media. For example, sharing content from the company or resharing content that the users upload. Another one is the sponsored advertisement or stories on Facebook or Instagram. Fan pages on Facebook can also be used on branding. These pages are built from consumers – fans, who trust and follow the brand and are more open to accept new data for it (Alharbie, 2015).

A link is developed between the branding and the public policies in order to communicate the brand. In this link, the trade, the economy, the travel industry and the exports participate too. A model from Anholt was introduced on this field. This communication is occurring through the standing that comes from six unique channels: tourism and guests’ experience, location branding and its traditional products, policies that may influence their popularity because of the exposure that will take, the business and investment interest they pull in and the well-prepared staff, the social interest they present as an organization with high level cultural events, the human recourse’s base (Dilaveri, Karitsioti and Kargas, 2020).

Branding is significant for hotel companies in order to survive on the competition. For that reason, many companies have created a variety of different brands to have the attention of different types of travelers. Another reason of the importance of branding are the trust that consumers show to the hotel brand and increasement of satisfaction. In order the firms to manage the pressure from financial specialists, they develop many sub brands to create new openings in different levels of pricing and services (Demirçiftçi and Kizilirmak, 2016).
The branding strategy is utilized from hotel firms to accomplish better position on the market. Using brand names has empowered the hotel owners and financial specialists to make franchise and management contract. Hilton and Marriot use this strategy in order to get grown through this. Moreover, through this strategy the individual hotels were helped to succeed higher occupancy percentages and revenues. Branding help consumers to learn more about the product and its quality. So, travelers pay a lot of attention on quality, appearance and reputation of services (Demirçiftçi and Kizilirmak, 2016).

The hotel firms use their brand in order to have bigger profits. Corporate brands affect widely the hotel profits when they are more important to consumers and hard to copy by other hotels (Silva, Gerwe and Becerra, 2017). Branding has an exceptional role in tourism and hospitality industry because the companies and organizations can communicate the quality of the products and services and create a positive image and a cozy relationship between possible clients. In the digital era, marketers’ essential objective is branding and manage to place their hotel in a position where the consumers will think of it first when they want to book a room. Moreover, hotel firms should make important and valuable brand relationship by understanding and knowing their target customers, their values and their service demands (Sarinastiti and Uljanatunnisa, 2020).

The brand name is really significant for travelers during the selection process, because eliminates the possibility of choosing something that it will not satisfy them. So, marketers consider branding as a powerful marketing tool and hoteliers believe that brand quality is an advantage for the company and what differ them from their competitors. Successful marketing strategies lead to the increase of sales and customer satisfaction and profitability. Besides, worldwide hotel firms have made profit while they were expanding all over the world. Primary assets on this are better operative booking systems, worldwide sales departments and greater buying power (Demirçiftçi and Kizilirmak, 2016).
2.2 Brand Loyalty through the brand community

Brand loyalty can be a helpful way to examine the interaction between the consumer’s relationship with the brand and the brand community. The consumer’s behavior in a brand community is an element of his or her relationship not only with the brand and members of community, but also with the firm and the product (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002). A basic element is the brand relationship quality, which can be defined as the level to which the client “sees” the brand as a satisfactory partner in their relationship. The users which are connected through a brand create a strong bond with each other (Muntinga, Moorman and Smit, 2011).

The first researches about brand loyalty were focused on behavior. Brand loyalty was considered as the subset of repeat purchase behavior and the goal to repeat this action. Afterward, new researches showed that brand loyalty is the total of two elements: the brand loyal behavior and the brand loyal attitudes. The attitude behind the bought is significant because it drives behavior. While brand loyal behavior is dictated by situational factors such as accessibility, the attitudes last longer. Loyalty is trust, an act of will without calculating expenses and advantages (Christou, 2015). Brand loyalty, consequently brings sales revenues, market share, productivity to the companies and assist them to develop or at least keep themselves in the market arena (Rayat, Rayat and Rayat, 2017). In hospitality sector, there are three types of measurement of brand loyalty: repeat visitation, intention to return and recommendations to others (Manthiou, Kang, Sumarjan and Tang, 2016).

A brand community based on social media has two parts: social media and brand community. We have already explained what is social media and its characteristics. On the other hand, community is comprised of its entities and the relationships among them (McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig, 2002). In our case, this community includes the brand, the product, the clients, the firm and social media, the platform that the community exists. Brand events bring members and other parts closer. Through the interactions, there is new experience related to purchasing process, new information is shared between members and marketers. These procedures help to strengthen the bond between all the parts of community. Laroche, Habibi and Richard (2013) suggested that social media can play a crucial role in this bond. When a member-user of social media “visits” the brand’s page, comments, shares content and communicate with the
marketers and/or other members, these members is participating in the community and the community becomes visible.

Social and conventional media communication has a significant influence in improving the brand value by expanding the probability that a brand will be incorporated in the thoughts of consumer, simplifying the client’s choice and transforming that decision into a habit (Coulter, Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012).

Brand equity can be described as the value of a brand. According to American Marketing Association, brand equity is being based on clients’ thoughts about positive attributes and outcomes of brand use. The power of a brand lies in what clients have learned, felt, seen and heard about the brand through time. First priority of marketers is to build strong ties by guaranteeing that clients have the correct experiences with the product and the brand. This is to guarantee that ideal feelings, pictures, feelings and experiences have been linked with the brand. Consequently, all the client’s experience is built through the different channels of interactivity online and offline. However, the offline experience has to be on the same level that this one on the Internet (Odhiambo and Adhiambo, 2012).

The role of brand equity is different from business to business. Firstly, brand equity is more significant for low-contribution purchases with simple process of decision. Secondly, this term can be basic when the use of the product can be seen by other users. Thirdly, when the experiences can be passed from one generation to the another, then the brand equity is vital. Fourthly, when the quality is hard to be examined before the use, the role of the brand is critical to persuade the consumers to buy it. Firms that their brand value is high out of Internet, have the ability to imitate their brand online. Although, this can be done to the highly of the quality, especially for design. The low-quality design may cost value and consumers. On the other hand, the good one will have positive outcome (Odhiambo and Adhiambo, 2012). Brand equity is a vital idea for brand management. Its examination can be approached from three alternate points of view: client, financial and a combination of both (Callarisa, García, Cardiff and Roshchina, 2012).

In the tourism market, the customers are numerous and anonymous, which makes it difficult for social media company to develop personal relationship with each one of them. This is why, the marketers should use an incredible symbol-the brand- to build this relationship (Christou, 2015). Christou (2015) proposes three elements that
influence trust in tourism social media brand, the social media brand, the firm behind the brand and the user collaborating with the brand. These three elements are related to brand-consumer relationship. He also proposed that trust in a tourism social media brand will lead to brand loyalty (Christou, 2015).

Tourism social media brand reputation can be created through correspondence. However, concepts such as security, dependability, quality and performance of the product are important too. When a person finds out that another person has been satisfied from a brand, then he or she tends to trust easily the brand (Sigala, 2010). Marketers should build trust through social media for the travel brands. The brand characteristics of social media such as brand consistency, brand competence, and brand reputation are really more significant in building up and maintain voyager’s trust (Christou, 2015).

Brand equity provides the ability to hotel firms to differ their brand from others and to request additional charge and maintain clients’ loyalty (Aaker, 1996). Clients who choose to stay in top quality hotels, pay an extra charge. Hotel chains use brand equity in order to grow in various markets. Brands help hotel firms to make more deals about franchising in markets all over the world. The Critical Success Factors have a significant part on the power of a brand and considered as a necessary cost for entry into the global hospitality market. These factors can be the location, the reservation system, revenue management system, loyalty program, market presence, brand strength, brand portfolio and operating management system (Demirçiftçi and Kızılırmak, 2016).

The accomplishment of social media brand predictability requires consistency. This requests the continuous control of product’s quality through control techniques. This means that marketers should not make big changes to product. If changes are necessary, the marketers should communicate with the brand community and inform them. Apart from that, marketers should create more opportunities for users to interact with the brand’s social media. However, they have to secure that all the different communication channels share the same and credible information. Travel social media firms should focus in particular areas and put their efforts on them. Marketers’ responsibility is to understand what the travelers need and think about these areas, so they can create a campaign close to them. In that case, they can use opinion leaders in order to speak on behalf of brand in social media. Moreover, the marketers should think that they have to be honest with their brand community and keep their promises and
maintain the quality at the same level. All the above techniques influence the consumers to share positive word-of-mouth (Christou, 2015). Even in the cases of negative reviews, the user generated content can lead to a high level of fulfillment with this type of communication and increase the awareness of the brand – whether or not the content mirrors the brand positively or negatively (Coulter, Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012).

2.3 Branding on social media

Social media make the brand real. Users trust the brand more than hotel reviews and seek for each other help. Regardless of a brand tries to be connected with new associates on LinkedIn or with the brand community through Facebook or helping new customers via Youtube videos, travel industry is making social media one of the basic parts of the total effort (Lanz, Fischhof and Lee, 2010).

There are three laws that can define the relationship between the brand and the customer. First of all is the Sarnoff’s Law, which was formulated first for the radio, but can be correlated to social media too. This law supports that a network of 100 members is 10 times more valuable in terms of reachability than a network of 10 members. If we adapt this law to our case, we understand that the more people are connected to a brand through social media platforms the more the effect. Another law is Metcalfe’s. The law specifies that the greater number of users with the service, the more significant the service become to the community. On the world of social media this means that every new member that participate to the community makes the users’ profile more valuable. As the most people engage with the things they love and take value from, they attend to communicate this with their family and friends. So, as we sharing what we like through social media, the brand community expanded through our community. This can lead us to the conclusion that the development of community is starting from the pleasure brands’ products or services offer. The last law is Reed’s, which supports that the capacity of a bid network can grow with the size of the network itself. This law applies to the active social networks. Therefore, the law stresses on the influence of the network value by perceiving and supporting group of members. A well-organized network energizes the arrangement of solid subgroups and flow of communication that
put more significance on important data within the network. This subgroup can be developed by the effort of each member to connect with other members. With a new member addition, the quantity of connection is likewise expanded as the development of a subgroup (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012).

There are some factors that determine the way social media effect brand awareness, according to Odhiambo and Adhiambo (2012). The first factor is the audience and the unique visitors. This really important factor is related with the brand and how people recognize it. It requires from marketer to communicate the brand as often as possible to create brand awareness. A well-known brand will attract a more extensive mas of users. The marketer should know the type of exposure that the brand products or service can have on social media as it is has major part to the sales. Apart from that, the advertiser should have a record about the monthly visitors and of course through time he/she ought to have the option to decide how promotion campaigns impact the new supporters. Though social media the marketer also will be able to find out if the new followers are friends to your already existing ones (Odhiambo and Adhiambo, 2012).

Another factor is influence, which is part of the job of marketer to control if it positive, negative or neutral. A way to succeed that is through the comments from users. The provided information from comments can be used from the marketing tram to make corrections or adjustments whenever required. In the case of negative impact, the clients seem dissatisfied from the brand and the marketer should be active and pay attention to what the users need (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012).

Engagement is the third factor. The degree of commitment can be controlled by the quantity of users who really react to the brand message. The consumption process can build strong customer engagement. In our case, consumption can be described as reading, sharing, watching, listening or downloading digital stuff about the brand. It is really important for marketer to report all these “acts” of liking, retweeting, sharing as can be a measure of how the audience is interested on the brand message (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012).

The last factor is action and loyalty and it has to do with the frequency of the users make comments on the brand’s content. Their loyalty can be determined by user’s message and their sharing experience about the product or service. A devoted client will repeat his/her purchase. These dedicated users are probably unpaid marketers, who
spread the word of mouth on the behalf of the brand and its marketing team (Odhiambo & Adhiambo, 2012).

Branded social media activities can be beneficial for businesses in different fields, such as brand awareness, customer engagement and loyalty, customer word-of-mouth communication and control of brand’s webpage traffic. These activities are based on social media and can include techniques for example business-to-consumer communication, branded social media content, engagement experiences, social presence and participation of a brand persona (Ashley and Tuten, 2015). If social media used successfully, it can help the firm to gather their supporters and acquire vital and operational advantages (Chan and Guillet, 2011).

In social media, clients participate and share content. Considering the participation, this can include just consuming of the social media content or being part of the content and producing it. The clients may focus in value, structure, scope, effect and customer objectives for commitment. The branded content is possible to be used for promotion to influence clients’ attitudes and persuade them to share it. As long as the quality of the content is high, the clients will interact easily. According to Medury (2011), while a consumer discovers new information about a brand through social media, the emotional bond with the brand becomes stronger whether or not the content was useful or passionate (Ashley and Tuten, 2015).

Facebook was considered productive in making clients’ support when positive feelings are made (Cervellon and Galipienzo, 2015). Clients’ experience with brands via social media is qualitatively different in comparison to the experiences from other media such as television or brochure, because clients can reflect it on their experience. There are three types of clients’ experiences with brands on Facebook: a cognitive experience, when clients start to think, a sensorial experience, when the Facebook page impress their senses and an emotional experience, when they experience compelling feelings (Smith, 2013). A research was contacted in UK with 6400 users of Facebook, Smith (2013) found out that the users experience these three types, although the most significant was that the main driver for positive experience is raising the interest of them. This positive experience will define the future actions of the client. Specifically, participants who had solid positive feelings is three times more possible to proclaim they would take part in online activities of the brand such us a positive review, a good marking or sharing content with friends. De Vries, Gansler and Leeflang (2012) examine the variables which impact the quantity of “likes” on brand posts. They
discovered that positive comments, the quantity of comments shared and the interactive content are related to the quantity of “likes”.

3. Hospitality and Marketing

3.1 Online Marketing

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is “an organizational function and a set of procedures for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the company and its partners.

Online marketing can be described as the use of Internet and related digital technologies to succeed marketing goals. These goals can be realized by use of social media platforms, which are tools for marketers. This means that Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. are methods to achieve marketing strategies through the internet. Therefore, it is important for marketers to choose the appropriate platforms for their goals. A good marketing goal enables marketers to meet new clients, while they keeping the old ones (Odhiambo and Adhiambo, 2012).

Online marketing has a plenty of advantages. First of all, the speed of information is really cost efficient and secondly there is no geographical limits. On the other hand, there are disadvantages too. The first issue is that language and cultural contrasts may introduce challenges in data gathering across national limits. Moreover, it tends to be hard to ensure that the person responding is the individual marketer thinks they are (Gay, Charlesworth and Esen, 2007).

Dissimilar to conventional media, online media offers you the chance to engage and listen what the public says. In real time, the hoteliers have access to knowledge and competitive intelligence, so they can design an adjusted marketing campaign in the future. They can, also, check the discussions and watch the consumers share the feedback, good or bad, and analyze the way the firm’s message is being embraced from users (Lanz, Fischhof and Lee, 2010).
Social media marketing is one of the fastest developing types of marketing. Especially, in the travel industry, where the information flow is big and centered around experience, social media has a key role for this area as it joins online and interactive marketing methods. This focused interaction between companies and customers permits the improvement of a positive and productive connection between client and business. Social media offers various chances to spread messages and fortify the brand identity. Nowadays, social media dominate in people’s daily habits, so this change create new consumption habits, new chances and platforms for marketers and especially for hotel marketing stuff (Undey, Koroglu and Duran, 2019). Now, different marketing strategies are being followed by marketers and related to hotel industry. The consumers have been transformed to skeptical and market-conscious and drive marketers to find new promoting techniques. The innovative technology on marketing increases the power, transportation territory, and speed of users’ mouth to mouth communication which is taking place on social media. In any case, social media platforms show a variety of issues for hoteliers and they need to realize how to make them part of their business (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011)

In digital marketing, one of the first steps a company should make is the design of a website. This should be easy in use and functional in all the devises with responsive design. However, there are some points that the social media can be a better tool on digital marketing. For example, the information is transferred from the users themselves and not from experts, which means that there is more transparency than the stylized advertisements. The same path is followed with the content and in contrary with the website, on social media the upload of new content is more frequent. For the clients, there are some option, such us the sharing of their own material, like photos and videos and the publish of their own experiences with other users. On the other side, social media offers some advantages to businesses too. First of all, the environment of social media is dominated by the users themselves, so a choice of a company to present there the new products and services make users feel more open to new information. Secondly, social media can promote and fortify the brand name (Spyrantis, Nerantzaki, Tsourela and Paschaloudis, 2020).
3.2 Hospitality

Since the launch of the Internet, the hotel industry has been one of the quickest developing sectors, using websites to communicate with the public. The explanation of this can be credited to the fact that booking directly from hotel’s website provide to guests better offers contrasted with other booking channels. Recently, other social media platforms are additionally effective on search, compare and book hotels by consumers, bringing a revolution to the accommodation industry (Siamagka, Christodoulides and Michaelidou, 2015).

One of the characteristics of travel industry is the orientation to knowledge, so the participation into new developments in information technology, social media platforms and digital communication tools are adjusted to their systems. It is crucial that travel industry is data concentrated area and that social media provide many accesses like, moving, sharing, reusing and saving information. In this way, it is important to screen all the changes of technologies and consume culture that influence the dissemination and accessibility of travel data (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). Social media and websites have assumed a significant part in marketing and promotion in the travel industry. It is noticed that social media in travel area is fast increasing to interface with customers, build up connections and create brand awareness. The abstract structure of travel industry depends on experience and deals common dangers before buying, since it is difficult to evaluate a service before it is devoured. Hence, hotel industry is attempting to embody the services identified with the quality and the scope of the services they offer (Undey, Koroglu and Duran, 2019).

Social media is really crucial for the tourism industry. Travelers need information that will help them during the planning of a trip or the decision making of the destination and the tourism products. Proposals from other individuals are really significant in this process, because of the intangibility of these products. Social media can help on this area with all the material and content that users-consumers create. This material is easier for other users-consumers to trust and eventually buy (Popesku, 2014).

Social media platforms are an essential tool for the analysis of tourists’ attitudes. The increased purchases and proposals form other users prove it. If hoteliers want to build a brand on a successful service base, their offers should be unique and according
to customer experience. Travelers need to know about their experience and how it will be by verified sources in order to create expectations of what they are going to see on the destination they have chosen (Živković, Gajić and Brdar, 2014).

Travelers want to avoid uncertainty, so they try to gather all the necessary data that will help them to make the right decision. Modern travelers put more trust in other travelers’ opinions through social media than those which come from marketing advices. Since social media platforms are low-cost and bias-free, it is an advantage for marketers (Živković, Gajić and Brdar, 2014).

On the last decade, we released that the number of social media has been increased. However, their first goal is to encourage users-customers to post and share their travel experiences, comments and thoughts. So, social media keeps on affecting communication positively or negatively (Živković, Gajić and Brdar, 2014). So, travelers become co-designers, co-producers, co-marketers and co-consumers of travel industry (Sotiriadis, 2017).

Social media permits hoteliers to build a relationship with their clients like no other media has recently permitted. In enables them to build up a one-to-one relationship where they can have regular feedback on how the guests respond to the promotion message. Hotels can easily receive feedback about their offers and the quality of their services. Furthermore, they can learn about their guests’ needs. Offering reservations helps to keep the discussion between the hotel and the guests through the social media. For example, hoteliers can find out details about their guests such us preferred view, favorite meals and drinks, type of beds and pillows. This kind of personalized service will bring the clients back. This encourages customers to follow hotel’s social media profiles. Through these sites they can also ask questions and make arrangements, which lead to more efficient customer service. All these lead to brand loyalty (Nassar, 2012).

Hotels from all over the world use social media as a key for their marketing strategy. Although, the example of use differs from one location to the other. Openness to the idea, access to the Internet and the framework of Internet use can lead to the difference of Internet use. According to the search of Nassar (2012), hotels which have three or more stars and bigger room capacities tend to use social media more than the other hotel categories.

Hoteliers, who use social media as part of their marketing strategy, have seen that they are cost-effective especially when it is related with the interaction and
engagement with future customers. Through social media platforms, they can use a rating system which helps them to evaluate and monitor their hotel’s image and reputation. Previous researches have shown that hotel firms which communicate with their guests through social media, get their clients to spend more, return for another stay and get more references from their guests. Moreover, it is really important that every comment from them should be noticed, because it will help hotel to gather positive reviews, recommendations and following clients and reduce the negative criticism (Jones, 2018).

A hotel should be participating to online activities such as liking, posting, tweeting because this implies that they are having an active role on the online marketing. To remain at a high level, the hotels have to engaged and to be involved with their audience by taking part on online discussions, forums about hospitality and tourism, podcasts, RSS channels, review websites. All the above will help the hotel to raise the awareness and to build relationship with old and new clients (Lim, 2010).

The new era of social media in the hospitality industry brings also some new challenges that the hotels have to face. First of all, social media enhance the power to everyone to express their opinion. So, a hotel may be faced with a bad review. Through them, the hotels lose the control on the clients’ evaluation. Specifically, while justified reviews taken from social media can help hotels to improve their services, at the same time clients can disseminate harming data through them, without giving the chance to hoteliers to resolve their complaints. In order to control this phenomenon, hotels should build strong social media image. For example, Marriott hotels hired personnel to tracking clients’ reviews and report them to the management team (Kim and Hardin, 2010).

Another challenge for hotel industry is the false reviews. For example, employees from a hotel may have post positive review on a website and also may be asked to make negative comments for the services of on opponent hotel. Besides that, there are companies which they offer this kind of services to the businessmen by creating fake social media profiles for that purpose exactly. Websites that host users’ reviews must find a way to secure that the reviews are from real profiles and not fake ones in order not only to protect the brand, but the original idea that users can express their opinion and share their experience (Kim and Hardin, 2010).

There are a few recent studies on social media marketing in hotel industry. The effectiveness of Facebook and Twitter was explored by Leung, Bai and Stahura (2015).
They discovered that these two social media platforms have the same effectiveness and hoteliers use the same methods for both of them. On the other hand, the social media marketing activity from hotel brands in China was evaluated. The findings show that hoteliers use mostly social media to collect and spread information rather for marketing purposes (Guillet, Kucukusta and Liu, 2016). Similar research was conducted in Europe by Högberg (2017). He examined the use of hotels’ social media in seven countries of Europe with international hotel chain. Unlike China, the European hotels use their social media for marketing purposes, information sharing, gathering data and knowledge, motivation, and brand values, inside communication and managing users’ content. Moreover, the study represented that Facebook and Instagram are the most used platforms.
PART II: The research

1. Methodology

To fulfil the aim of this paper we choose a quantitate research method. Firstly, we wanted to classify, measure and analyze the use of social media platforms from the chosen hotels. We focused on gathering as much data for their social media activity as possible. Then, we continued with content analysis. Content analysis is an “empirical technique, that includes the counting, identifications of issues and interpretation of a text, which is assumed to be critical” (Hannam and Knox, 2005). Content analysis requires the arrangement of the different components or parts to help specialists explain trends (Oliveira and Panyik, 2015). Social media are a new and promised technique for all the aspects of business life, but mostly for the tourism and hospitality industry. Every business which wants to dominate in this field have to use them (Hays, Page and Buhalís, 2013). So, posts, likes, reactions, comments and stories are becoming the center of our research. Apart from that, we use content analysis in order to understand if the digital image of hotels on social media can help on branding. So, our belief is that this method will helps us to portray patterns in communication content and to understand successful and solid branding strategies for hotels in Greece.

Specifically, we choose to analyze the social media profiles of five well-known hotels in Greece. These hotels are: Sani Resort from Chalkidiki, Costa Navarino from Messinia, Divani Caravel Hotel from Athens, Nissaki Boutique Hotel from Mykonos and Katikies from Santorini. All the above are five-star hotels and belong to the category of luxury accommodation. First of all, we chose them because they have been awarded several times from the users of TripAdvisor in numerous categories. Secondly, we chose these hotels based on their location. Every summer these locations are the most popular among others in travelers’ mind and a large number of tourists visit them.

Apart from that, it is really important to analyze each hotel separately and learn basic information about them. All the information was collected from the official website of the hotels. Firstly, it is Sani Resort, which is located in a private area of 4.500 kilometers. This area hosted five hotels: Sani Beach Hotel, Sani Beach Club, Sani Asterias, Porto Sani and Sani Dunes. In the middle of these there is Sani Marina, where
numerous shops and restaurants are available to everyone and not only to the clients of the hotels. Sani Resort started forty years ago as a family business and now has become a world famous resort. Among the activities that offered are cruises with private yachts, tennis lesson under the signature of Rafa Nadal, football trainings from Chelsea F.C and delicious menus from chefs awarded with Michelin stars. Moreover, Sani Resort hosts festivals and contests, such as Sani festival and Sani Gourmet.

Second on the list is Costa Navarino, which is located on the Messinia on the southwest Peloponnese. Costa Navarino is separated to five areas. The Navarino Dunes, which the Romanos and the Westin Resords are located ready to welcome guests from all over the world. Then, the Navarino Bay with an ultra luxury hotel and pool villas. The third area is the Navarino Waterfront with the lagoon pools and the beachfront villas. In this area, there is a marketplace too with a vivid nightlife. Navarino Hills is the fourth area, where besides resort and villas, guests can visit golf courts designed and organized from the biggest athletes of the sport. The last area is the Navarino Blues with three thematic resorts and a variety of sport activities. Costa Navarino is a hotel oriented to the physical beauties of its location by offering sports activities and experiences close to nature.

Third, it is the Divani Caravel in Athens, which is located at the center of the Greek capital. It is a member of the hotel chain “Divani Caravel”, which occurs hotels in many places all over the country. It is also a five-star hotel which its biggest asset is its location, next to the famous sightseeing of Athens and of course the beautiful view to Acropolis and Lycavitos. It is a hotel that differs from the other four, because it is open all the year, as a city hotel.

Moving on the island part of Greece, there is the fourth hotel, Nissaki Boutique hotel in Mykonos. It is located between the two famous beaches of Mykonos, Psarou and Platys Gialos. Both families and young couples can be hosted. Besides the location of the hotel, the small distance from the sea offers beautiful sceneries. The facilities offer moments of wellness and self-care provided by experts and on the other hand experiences close to the Greek culture and gastronomy.

Last but not least, it is the Katikies Hotel in Santorini. Katikies is a hotel chain with plenty hotels and villas in Santorini and Mykonos. We chose the first one, which is located in Oia. All the hotels, including this, are open to adults and children up to thirteen years old. Following the architecture of Cyclades, the hotel is built on the cliff with the colors of blue and white. Besides, the restaurant and pools, the hotel offers to
its guests facilities for spa and wellness, fashion boutique and wedding planning services.

The digital activity of these five hotels were analyzed and especially this one that was related with the social media platforms of Facebook and Instagram. Those two platforms were chosen because of their popularity and the large base of users they have. Moreover, as we mention above, according to the Social Media Marketer (2020) these two applications gather the interest and the attention of digital marketers. So, it is critical to understand if they use the same methods in those two platforms and how they are related with the branding. In order to analyze these methods, we chose to focus our research to the high season of these hotels. The majority of the hotels we mentioned above work with tourists from abroad during the summer months. So, we analyzed the posts from May until September. These five months are the peak of the season for the majority of Greek hotels, due to the large number of tourists that visited our country.

2. Results

All the data we collect from the social media profiles of these five hotels, we allocate them on tables in order to make easily the comparisons. Firstly, we gather all the posts from these five months and then we separate them in categories according to the photo and the text each one had. So, the categories were created were the following:

- Promotional: posts that encourage users to proceed to the website in order to book a room or to create to them the desire of Greek summer experience
- Facilities and activities: posts which describe or present the hotel facilities and activities that offered on the area of the hotels
- Location: posts about the specific location of the hotel, its characteristics and the possibilities that offers to the guests
- Events: these posts are related with events organized by the hotel itself in order to entertain not only the hosted guests but the people in the wider area, such us festivals, thematic nights and competitions
- Collaborations: posts that refer to the partnerships that the hotel have with other companies or person in order to provide top quality products and services to their guests
- Awards: these posts related with prices or submissions a hotel has on a contest
- Social responsibility: posts that are related with environmental issues, sustainability and community issues

The aim of this categorization was to analyze the thematic of the posts and also, the impact of them on public. Besides that, it is really important to examine them because they are the presence of the hotel on social media and the image that the marketers want the public to have about the hotel.

As we mention above, there are some elements on social media presence that can help branding. The posts from the company itself, the posts that other users make from the company and company choose to share, the reactions to these posts and the ads that a company choose to show to users after a visit in the website or the Facebook page. All these elements were examined in order to help us to understand if famous hotel brands in Greece choose to promote their brand through social media platforms.

Moreover, there are two points that we have to explain before we start to show the results. In all thematic categories, a really important role has the posts from the users-guests themselves. These posts were chosen from the hotel marketer to be on the hotel’s social media profile. Another point is the stories. The stories are really popular on Instagram, but they are uploaded only for one day. Our research was contacted after the period we examine and all the stories were lost. We had access to those that the social media manager chose to save in a specific thematic “highlight” and only for Instagram. But at any case, the preference and the thematic can help us to understand the social media techniques they have been following.

First of all, it is important to mention that there was a lot of differences among the hotels, but also a few commonalities. There was differentiation between the two social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram too. To be more analytical, for these five months we examine 251 posts from Facebook and 268 posts from Instagram separately from the Instagram stories. In Tables 1 and 2 there are an analytic presentation of our findings for each hotel.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sani Resort</th>
<th>Costa Navarino</th>
<th>Divani Caravel</th>
<th>Nissaki</th>
<th>Katikies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1. Facebook posts from hotel’s profile from May to September 2020*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sani Resort</th>
<th>Costa Navarino</th>
<th>Divani Caravel</th>
<th>Nissaki</th>
<th>Katikies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Instagram posts from hotels’ profile from May to September 2020*

All these posts were categorized in seven categories according to the content of the posts. We followed these categories for both the social media platforms we examined. However, not all the categories found in all the hotels and this is the first difference we noticed between them. Especially on Facebook there is a bigger variety of categories than on Instagram.
Table 3. Facebook posts categorized on seven thematic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Promotional</th>
<th>Facilities &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Awards</th>
<th>Collaborations</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sani Resort</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Navarino</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divani Caravel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissaki</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katikies</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Instagram posts categorized on seven thematic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotel</th>
<th>Promotional</th>
<th>Facilities &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Awards</th>
<th>Collaborations</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sani Resort</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Navarino</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divani Caravel</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissaki</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katikies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides posts on Instagram, a really important role has also the Instagram stories. In our research, we have been able to take into consideration those that have been saved on hotels’ profiles. So, Sani Resort shared 65 stories, all in promotional
category. Costa Navarino shared 55 and the majority of them was related with the facilities and activities of the resort. On the same motive of theme is also the Katikies Santorini, which shared 77 stories. Nissaki shared 71 stories from the category of promotion too. However, Divani Caravel did not share any stories during the five-month period we examined.

Apart from the themes of the posts it is significant to analyze the popularity of the posts and the impact of these posts on the branding community. For that reason, we gather all the likes and comments from all the posts and tried to visualize the results. On the Facebook platform Sani Resort had 18.960 likes, Costa Navarino 13.490, Divani Caravel 4.922, Katikies 2.336 and Nissaki Boutique Hotel 989. On the contrary, the numbers on Instagram have changed completely. Costa Navarino has 63.946, Katikies 58.049, Sani Resort has 52.806, Divani Caravel 12.698 and Nissaki Boutique Hotel 7.134. However, because Instagram gives the ability to count the views from an uploaded video, we have to separate the views from likes. In this situation, only 3 from 5 hotels had uploaded videos and the views were: Sani Resort: 122.497, Costa Navarino 56.866, Katikies 4.467. At any case, we have to consider that the number of the views is connected with the number of the videos its profile has uploaded. So, Sani Resort uploaded 17 videos, Costa Navarino 10 and Katikies just one.

![Likes on Facebook](image)

*Figure 1. Facebook Likes on hotels’ pages from May to September 2020*
Another element of the engagement of the users is the comments. On this occasion there are no differences between the two platforms and the possibilities they offer. Although, we will find changes between the numbers from each platform and the amount of engagement from the public and the hotel profile too. So, for Facebook comments the number on Sani Resort’s page was 1.043, for Costa Navarino 168, for Katikies 56, for Nissaki 16 and for Divani Caravel 12. On the other side, the higher number of Instagram comments was mentioned on Katikies with 1.091, followed by Sani Resort with 1.007. Third is the Costa Navarino with 490. Then, the Nissaki with 108 comments and lastly the Divani Caravel with 66 comments. Besides the comments, shares are also important to the attractiveness of the content. Although this element is only available on Facebook, but the numbers can show us if the users embrace the hotel’s posts. So, Costa Navarino gathered 741 shares, Sani resort 648, Katikies 88, Divani Caravel and Nissaki both 29.

One of the most elements that we analyzed on this five-month period were the reactions of hotel’s profile to the users’ comments. We consider this element basic on the relationship a brand wants to have with its customers. In this category, we counted all the likes and the comments that we found on user’s comments from the hotel ’s profile. Concerning on the different social media platforms, we noticed differences that
can lead us to interesting results about the marketing strategies that have been followed so far. For the Facebook platform the results were the following: Sani Resort had 391 reactions, Costa Navarino 119, Katikies 17, Divani Caravel only one and Nissaki none. On the contrary, on Instagram the numbers have change a lot. Specifically, Katikies had 743, Costa Navarino 428, Sani Resort 390, Divani Caravel 53 and Nissaki 11.

![Reactions on Facebook & Instagram](image)

*Figure 3. Reactions of each hotel on Facebook & Instagram pages on users' comments*

Another significant parameter on a hotel’s social media profile is the users’ posts that the hotel chooses to share with the rest of brand community. On this part we separate the Facebook and Instagram posts from Instagram stories. So, for Facebook posts, Divani Caravel chose to share 7 posts from its guests, as well as Katikies. On the other hand, Nissaki shared only one guest’s post and Sani Resort and Costa Navarino did not include any of their guests post on their profiles. The same pattern was followed for these three hotels on Instagram posts too. On the contrary, Katikies shared 27 of users’ post and Divani Caravel 6. Referring to the Instagram stories, the numbers change. As we mention above, we count the stories that are saved from the hotel itself and categorized according to their themes. So, Costa Navarino shared 29 stories coming from guests, Nissaki 42, Katikies 5 and Sani Resort and Divani Caravel none.
3. Discussion of the findings

Through the literature review we understand that branding can have a close relationship with social media. One of the goals of social media marketing is to extent the branding recall and of course to establish strong connections with the brand community. The strategies that help on the direction are plenty and this research help us to notice them. All the five luxury hotels we analyzed focus on a different aspect of branding. As we mentioned before, the basic elements of promoting branding are the posts from the company itself, the posts from users, the reactions to users’ activity and the promotion of their ads. Each hotel used these elements differently according to their marketing goals.

Firstly, it is important to discuss the differences between the use of social media regarding the content. As Chan and Guillet (2011) mentioned on their research there are two types of hotels. Those that upload only promotional material and the others that they want to engage more with the users. In the first category, these hotels use social media platforms as another tool of advertisement and promotion of their services. There is lack of communication with their users and they do not attend to open conversations with their social media community. On the other hand, there are the more “socialized” hotels. They upload a wider range of content, they want to engage their community by asking questions, discussing experiences, answering on users’ questions. Characteristics from both types we can find on all the hotels. For example, on Facebook profile of Sani Resort we noticed posts that there were questions about their favorite moment on the resort, starting a conversation between the users and the brand. On the same idea, Katikies responded in the majority of user comments on Instagram posts or Nissaki chose to save on Instagram highlights stories from its guests.

Concerning the content, we define seven categories in which we separate the posts. In some hotels we noticed a wider variety on the categories than the others. All five hotels had the three basic categories – promotional, facilities and location- on both social media platforms. The next four categories were less “popular” among marketers, but they are important too. Posts that show to users a more “sensitive” side of the hotel can built a positive image. Users know that hotels are companies with the target of increase their profits. However, when they see posts about sustainability, environment consciousness and protection of the location feel that “human” side of the company.
The major product that luxury hotels offer is experiences. However, guests are aware that for these experiences not only the hotels are responsible, but the location too. So, when they “see” that the hotel who choose to spent their holidays is a member of the local community and society and takes care of them with respect, they feel more pleased that their money is spending on a good cause too. Showing blue water and beautiful beaches is something that almost every hotel on a Greek island can show, but daily care of the nature’s gifts and of the people that work and live there is the difference that can make the brand name stronger.

Besides the posts that the company itself uploads equally important are the posts of users. Especially, those the company chooses to share in its profile. Hotels and especially those that are correlated with tourism destinations, are promote not only their service and facilities, but also the experience of spending time on this location. Therefore, hotels invest on creating experiences in order to attract more clients. So, what would be better from the guests themselves share their own living experiences on that hotel? Posts from users are really important for another reason too. Promotional videos can be easily made from marketing companies. But when potential clients see a story from a guest who already been there consider this story as a proof of the services and experiences the hotel promises. Through this, trust and loyalty are building between the company and the clients and the brand name becomes stronger. This tactic is followed almost from all the five hotels we examine. However, there are differences on the platforms. As we found out from the posts, this technique is followed mostly on Instagram. On Facebook only 3 from 5 hotels (Divani Caravel, Katikies, Nissaki) uploaded pictures from their users. On the contrary, on Instagram 4 from 5 hotels (Costa Navarino, Divani Caravel, Katikies, Nissaki) uploaded either photos or stories from their guests. Not only that but the amount of shared users’ content was increased.

All the above are examples of marketing techniques in order the hotel manage to build a relationship with its followers and the brand. However, as we can understand from the numbers, social marketers follow different strategies on each social media platform. Facebook and Instagram are two really different social media firms. The Facebook was the first social media platform ever existed and its base was the text and afterwards photos and videos added. On the other side, Instagram’s base is photos and the videos followed. The option of text was available from the beginning but it is really rare to find big texts under photos. From our research so far, we realized that the marketers concerning the hotel industry are more fan of the Instagram.
At first, 4 from 5 hotels upload the same posts on Facebook and Instagram. However, the posts on Instagram are more than Facebook’s. Another difference is that likes and comments are more too. As we mention above, we saw that the numbers of reactions on Instagram are bigger than Facebook’s. Of course, it is important to mention that on Instagram accounts the comments were more than Facebook’s. On the following figure, we will see the percentages of users’ comments that have at least one reaction on these different platforms.

![Bar chart showing percentages of users' comments with reactions on Facebook and Instagram](image)

*Figure 4. Percentages of users' comments that had reaction from hotel's profile*

As we noticed the percentages of reactions on comments on Instagram are higher in all five hotels. This differentiation from Facebook can help us to understand that the hotels seem to show a preference on Instagram. In the most of the cases, the posts are exactly the same on text and image, and maybe on comments but the hotel brand choose to react on those on Instagram. Through this, the users feel that their comments and content is welcomed and appreciated from the hotel itself. This shows that the hotel respects them and is open to discussion, opinions and suggestions. Apart from that, we can realize that the hotel community on Instagram is more active. They share content from the hotel’s location and facilities, ask questions about hotels, express their opinion
about hotel’s news, engage their friends on comments and use the hashtags the hotel uses too. All these are characteristics of a loyal community that follows the brand.

4. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The current research is focused on the social media platforms and how through them the brand name of the hotels can be increased. With the content analysis method, we tried to analyze the methods that used from hotels on the social media platforms.

The two social media platforms we chose was Facebook and Instagram. Indeed, the material we collect was from these two platforms. But hotels use other social media platforms such as Twitter, Pinterest, and Youtube. These social media have different characteristics than Instagram and Facebook. So, it will be interested if a future research could include these social media too. The content and its form are different on these platforms. A future research can focus on the adjustment of the social media plans on each platform and how the branding is promoted.

Another limitation, we have in this research was the time. The time period of the research was from May until September, the months of high season in Greece. Equally important issue is that the data was collected and analyzed a few weeks later of the end of September. This stop us from having access to the Instagram stories that are uploaded every day. If we conducted the research and collect the data these days maybe the results about Instagram stories would have shown us more clues about the social media strategy of each hotel.

On the other hand, we chose five luxury and well-known hotels. It will be interested also, to research how hotels from lower categories respond to the call of social media and try to promote their brand through them. Moreover, it will be interested to research how the hoteliers feel about this procedure of promotion and exposure to the audience.
Conclusion

On the center of this thesis is the benefits of social media for hotel industry. Social media is not only about connecting with people and share opinions and content. It can have an essential part in marketing and customer interaction. Together with the hotel industry can be an incredible combination with quick and great results.

Social media can help marketers to create a unique brand personality, yet additionally clients to communicate their brand perception through the user generated content (Nyangwe and Buhalis, 2018). The amount of this kind of content, which is created and shared by the clients themselves every day is countless and much more of the content a hotel can produce. This means that the tourists can have an important part on the branding process. Social media have changed the communication flows and either a new brand suggestion can rise out from the hotel-tourist communication or just through the content the users create and share.

Through our research we found that social media can be a key role on the building of branding. Hotel brands can understand better their clients through them, find their desires and needs. Social media offers them an opportunity for constant feedback, which will help them to be better, to evolve and grow. The user generated content is the perfect tool for hoteliers to show the stories of their guests and promote their services and experiences they offer. Our research showed that the better tool to succeed that is the Instagram. The level of evolvement is higher than Facebook. The entire base of this social media platform makes it easier, because it is a photo-based concept.

On the other hand, the engagement of the hotel itself can help the brand community to grow through the social media platforms. The reactions and quick responses can be a wonderful tool to that path. The satisfied customers by showing their experiences can attract more users, who eventually will and up customers of the brand too.

As a result, the hotel industry should invest in their social media presence and make them part of their business if they want to keep up their existence, be productive and find new creative ways to differ from their competitors. Perhaps the cost of investment is low, but it will lead on brand recognition.
References


Ha, A. (2015). An Experiment: Instagram Marketing Techniques and Their Effectiveness. BA. California Polytechnic State University. Available at: https://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1206&context=comss


Lim, W. (2010). The Effects of social media networks in the hospitality industry. Available at: https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1694&context=thesesdissertations


Perdue, D. J. (2010). Social media marketing: Gaining a competitive advantage by reaching the masses. Senior Thesis. Liberty University. Available at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1135&context=honors


