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## The Value of Social Networking Sites in Hotels

Diffley, S., & McCole, P. (2019). The Value of Social Networking Sites in Hotels. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 22(2), 114-132. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-01-2017-0027>

**Published in:**  
Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal

**Document Version:**  
Peer reviewed version

**Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**  
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

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Journal:	<i>Qualitative Market Research</i>
Manuscript ID	QMR-01-2017-0027.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Social networking sites, social media, qualitative study, in-depth interviews

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## The Value of Social Networking Sites in Hotels

### Abstract

**Purpose** – Despite the rapid growth of social networking sites, research demonstrating the marketing application of these technologies is lacking. Consequently, this paper seeks to explore the impact of social networking sites on hotel marketing activities.

**Design/methodology/approach** – An exploratory study was employed. Adopting a key informant approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with 14 respondents in the hotel industry who use social networking sites as part of their hotel marketing efforts.

**Findings** – Networked interactions facilitated by social networking sites can influence the marketing activities of hotels in many ways. This extends to deeper connections and co-creating value with customers to enhance the market offerings and promotional activities of the firm. Not all interviewees capitalised upon the capabilities offered by social networking sites.

**Practical implications** – Social networking sites act as a key knowledge resource that can be employed by practitioners to create and deliver superior customer value. However, the extent to which this is achieved depends on who is responsible for implementing it. Specifically, those with a more proactive attitude and approach towards marketing on social networking sites tend to reap greater benefits.

**Originality/value** – Using the service-dominant logic as a guide, this paper offers greater insight into the theory and practice of social media marketing in the hotel industry, an under-studied and fragmented research area.

**Keywords** – Social networking sites, social media, qualitative study, in-depth interviews

**Paper type** – Research paper

### 1. Introduction

The rise of social media has had a significant impact on marketing academia and practice (Ngai *et al.*, 2015; Whiting and Williams, 2013). Ngai *et al.* (2015: 33) highlight that “in just one decade, social media have revolutionized the life of many people and thus attracted much attention, not only from industry, but also academia”. Offering customers the ability to socially interact with strong and weak ties, to seek and share information with their networks, and express their opinions on matters (Whiting and Williams, 2013), social media have permeated the lives of customers, with social networking activities accounting for approximately a third of total time spent online (McGrath, 2016).

The deep and networked interactions made possible by social technologies have resulted in an active and empowered consumer who can seek out, share and generate information with other consumers. Increasingly, consumers are actively sharing their experiences of brands and products with one another (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2013). Thus, social media technologies provide the opportunity for firms to engage customers in conversations whereby valuable information can be exchanged and applied to add value to customer relationships. Therefore, “using social media,

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3 organizations can forge relationships with existing as well as new customers and form communities  
4 that interactively collaborate to identify and understand problems and develop solutions for them”  
5 (Sashi, 2012: 255). In effect, firms can engage customers as collaborators in the creation of value,  
6 driving superior performance as a result (Hajli, 2014).  
7

8 Despite the pervasiveness of social technologies, literature and research in the area of social  
9 media marketing is in its early stages (Ngai *et al.*, 2015) and fragmented in nature (Felix *et al.*, 2016).  
10 Notably, literature draws attention to the lack of theoretical research demonstrating the marketing  
11 effectiveness of social media (Leung *et al.*, 2015). Few studies have investigated the implications of  
12 the social media activities of firms (Dijkmans *et al.*, 2015), the impact of social media interactions on  
13 customer-brand relationships (Hudson *et al.*, 2016), and/or the role of social media from the firm’s  
14 perspective (Valos *et al.*, 2016). As platforms that continuously evolve, the benefits of social media  
15 use require attention (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014).  
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18 This research is conducted in the tourism and hospitality industry. Although literature has  
19 drawn attention to the key role played by social media in tourism and hospitality, there is a lack of  
20 research investigating the impact of social media in this industry (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2013; Hudson *et al.*,  
21 2016; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2015; Line and Runyan, 2012; Melián-González and  
22 Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). This is surprising considering that social media content has the power to  
23 impact customer choice, trust and involvement in tourism providers (Wang *et al.*, 2012).  
24 Increasingly, social media sites are the first source of information for customers (tourists). Social  
25 networking sites (SNSs) represent a key relationship marketing mechanism in the hospitality industry  
26 (Li and Chang, 2016). Social technologies have empowered customers, allowing them to  
27 communicate their qualitative experiences and express their level of satisfaction with destinations.  
28 In the hotel industry, those responsible for social media marketing must be proactive in their use of  
29 social media by actively monitoring and responding to customer reviews (González-Rodríguez *et al.*,  
30 2016; Kim *et al.*, 2016; Xie *et al.*, 2016).  
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## 35 2. Literature review

### 36 *Social media and social networking sites*

37 Social media encompasses platforms such as blogs, social networking sites, wikis and content-  
38 sharing sites (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011). Social media and traditional media are fundamentally  
39 different. In terms of interactivity and individualisation, social media facilitate two-way  
40 conversations between customers and between companies and customers, something traditional  
41 media cannot do (Valos *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, social technologies facilitate networked  
42 communications among groups of companies and customers (Trainor, 2012). Thus, the technological  
43 sophistication of social media (Valos *et al.*, 2016) has resulted in the proliferation of user-generated  
44 content, which in turn has given customers greater control over the creation and sharing of content  
45 (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). The nature of social media has also facilitated the integration of  
46 communication and distribution channels, allowing the customer to move seamlessly between  
47 them. The real-time and interactive nature of social media also provides a means for customers  
48 quickly and easily to gather, share and disseminate information with one another (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*,  
49 2013). The customer is now the driver of conversations that can influence the services,  
50 marketing and sales activities of firms (Baird and Parasnis, 2011). Notably, social media activities can  
51 be monitored and measured by firms on a real-time basis, with customers’ information shared and  
52 disseminated within these networks providing a key basis for improved decision making (Valos *et al.*,  
53 2016).  
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3 Of all social media platforms, SNSs have experienced the most prolific and transformative  
4 growth (Chang *et al.*, 2015). Defined by Kane *et al.* (2014: 279) as those sites where “users: (1) have  
5 a unique user profile that is constructed by the user, by members of their network, and by the  
6 platform; (2) access digital content through, and protect it from, various search mechanisms  
7 provided by the platform; (3) can articulate a list of other users with whom they share a relational  
8 connection; and (4) view and traverse their connections and those made by others on the platform”,  
9 SNSs have transformed the manner in which people communicate, build and maintain relationships  
10 (Lin *et al.*, 2014). Providing users with the ability to interact in a manner that was previously not  
11 afforded by other online and offline technologies (Kane *et al.*, 2014), the depth, networked and real-  
12 time nature of SNSs has drastically changed the manner in which information, products and services  
13 are obtained and consumed (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). As such, firms are increasingly employing  
14 social technologies as a part of their marketing efforts (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Valos *et al.*,  
15 2016).  
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### 20 *Marketing implications of social media*

21 The emergence of social media platforms has provided customers with the ability to access, generate  
22 and share vast amounts of information in a seamless and interactive manner, regardless of where  
23 they are physically situated (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). Customers will often source information  
24 from one another on SNSs before visiting company web sites (Li and Chang, 2016). This word-of-  
25 mouth communication can significantly impact performance through influencing purchase intentions  
26 and the level of product involvement (Wang *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, social media have been a  
27 significant driver of word-of-mouth in the form of customer reviews (Hajli, 2014). Tourism-specific  
28 SNSs such as TripAdvisor primarily act as reviewing mechanisms (Kane *et al.*, 2014). Xiang and Gretzel  
29 (2010) highlight that as the popularity of sites such as TripAdvisor continues to grow, they are likely  
30 to become the primary source of travel information. Xie *et al.* (2016) find that the quality and  
31 quantity of reviews have a significant impact on hotel popularity offline. Casaló *et al.* (2015) also find  
32 that inclusion on the best hotels lists on sites such as TripAdvisor positively impacts customer  
33 attitudes towards those hotels and resultant booking intentions. Inclusion on the worst hotels list has  
34 the reverse effect. However, the effects of inclusion on the best hotels list are greater than those of  
35 inclusion on the worst hotels list. As such, “the content generated on TripAdvisor's website has  
36 transformed reputation into a highly contested issue with critical implications. Reviews have  
37 provided the basis for travellers to draw conclusions about hotels' legitimacy and reputation” (Baka,  
38 2016: 160).  
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44 The high-level, real-time interactions taking place among groups of customers on social  
45 media platforms (Baird and Parasnis, 2011) also provide an opportunity for businesses to become a  
46 part of these networked communications, extending to the exchange of information pertaining to  
47 products and services (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010). Hence, these deep and networked interactions  
48 enhance customer engagement and subsequent value co-creation opportunities (Baird and Parasnis,  
49 2011). However, capitalising upon the customer interactions and information inherent in social  
50 media requires a more collaborative and networked approach to the management of customer  
51 relationships. The extension of customer relationship management (CRM) into a social CRM context  
52 (Trainor *et al.*, 2014) provides a means of overcoming the CRM failures experienced by many firms.  
53 The lack of interactivity facilitated by traditional CRM technologies has been cited as a factor  
54 contributing to these failures (Trainor, 2012). Thus, the deep and networked interactions afforded by  
55 social media act as a potential means of overcoming these failures (Baird and Parasnis, 2011;  
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3 Malthouse *et al.*, 2013; Trainor, 2012; Trainor *et al.*, 2014), enhancing a firm's ability to uncover and  
4 respond to customer needs and wants (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2013). The valuable information inherent in  
5 these collaborative interactions can, in turn, enhance the innovativeness of firms (Trainor, 2012).  
6

7 Despite the marketing implications of social media, research demonstrating how and why  
8 they are being used by companies is lacking (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). At present, while  
9 marketing budgets are increasingly allocated to social media, little is known about how the use of  
10 social media impacts customer-brand relationships (Hudson *et al.*, 2016). The manner in which social  
11 technologies can be employed as a means of building and maintaining a business represents a  
12 valuable research area (Ngai *et al.*, 2015). Notably, literature emphasises the importance of the  
13 customer experience for success in the hotel industry and the subsequent applicability of social  
14 media as a means of engaging with customers to enhance their hospitality experience. Yet little is  
15 known about how these deeper customer relationships can be achieved (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2013;  
16 Hudson *et al.*, 2016). Research has drawn attention to the lack of research assessing the impact of  
17 social media interactions with tourism brands on customer thoughts, feelings and behaviours  
18 towards brands (Hudson *et al.*, 2016). Kim *et al.* (2015) note that the value of social media in  
19 hospitality has been questioned by both practitioners and academics. As greater time and monetary  
20 investments are made, marketers are under pressure to demonstrate the impact of social  
21 technologies.  
22

23 This research employs the **service-dominant (S-D)** logic as a theoretical lens to examine the  
24 value of SNSs in hotel marketing activities.  
25

### 26 27 28 29 *S-D logic*

30 The central premise of S-D logic is that competitive advantage is achieved through identifying,  
31 developing and applying operant resources. Operant resources are invisible and intangible resources  
32 that are capable of producing effects. In contrast to operand resources, which are static, tangible and  
33 finite in nature, operant resources are dynamic and infinite in nature. They are capable of increasing  
34 the value of operand resources and creating additional operant resources. Skills and knowledge  
35 represent such a resource. The focus of S-D logic is on the exchange of these operant resources,  
36 referred to as 'service' in S-D logic vernacular (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Distinguishable from  
37 traditional concepts of *services* as intangible forms of goods (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a), service may  
38 be exchanged directly or indirectly through operand resources. Goods and services may be viewed as  
39 operand resources. While goods and services can act as key resources in value creation, their value is  
40 realised only when they are acted upon by operant resources. As such, goods and services are  
41 valuable, but service is super-ordinate (Vargo and Lusch, 2008a) and the concept of value-in-use  
42 becomes central to value creation. Value-in-use "argues that value can only be created with and  
43 determined by the user in the 'consumption' process and through use" (Lusch and Vargo, 2006b:  
44 284). This conveys that value is not embedded in goods, but is created by parties involved in the  
45 exchange together (Vargo *et al.*, 2008). Hence, while the customer may determine value, it is created  
46 through a collaborative and interactive process of mutual exchange (Vargo *et al.*, 2010). Social media  
47 platforms represent a facilitator of these collaborative interactions within which value can be created  
48 through the integration of resources (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008; Potts *et al.*, 2008).  
49

50 S-D logic views that experience influences how customers interpret value (Vargo and Lusch,  
51 2008b) and a customer's definition of what constitutes value will be in a constant state of change. As  
52 CRM moves into a social era, Chen and Vargo (2014) highlight the importance of adopting the S-D  
53 logic perspective in managing customer relationships. Given the value of social technologies in  
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3 facilitating open dialogue and the resultant ability to engage customers in the co-creation of value, a  
4 change embedded in S-D logic is necessary. This change includes adopting a perspective that value is  
5 co-created with customers; firms must assist customers in the value creation processes; and  
6 customers exist in networks wherein value is created. Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) argue that SNSs  
7 have become the most dominant and important facilitator of co-creation activities as they facilitate  
8 the convergence of networks wherein new knowledge can be generated (Potts *et al.*, 2008).  
9 Therefore, the collaborative activities afforded by social CRM technologies move customer  
10 relationships towards the process of engaging rather than managing people (Greenberg, 2010). The  
11 alignment between S-D logic and social media has been acknowledged in literature (see, for  
12 example, Edvardsson *et al.*, 2010; Gummesson, 2014; Shaw *et al.*, 2011) and, as such, SNSs act as the  
13 ideal platform to investigate the collaborative potential of customer relationships and the value  
14 these collaborative interactions have for marketing activities.

15  
16 S-D logic advocates a shift in marketing from 'to market to' customers to 'marketing with'  
17 customers (Vargo *et al.*, 2010). This has led to a new view of marketing—one that is driven by the  
18 need to understand customers and the facilitation of interactions as a means of gaining this  
19 understanding (Chen and Vargo, 2014). As the co-creation of value moves towards the concept of  
20 'marketing with' customers, it is logical that customers are involved in the development of  
21 marketing programmes to make them more informed and effective (Lusch and Vargo, 2006a). As  
22 detailed by Lee *et al.* (2011: 395), "with the accumulation of customer knowledge, a more informed  
23 firm should be able to plan and carry out its marketing program to cater to unmet customer needs  
24 better than its rivals".

25  
26 Thus, literature communicates that the deep and networked interactions facilitated by social  
27 technologies provide companies with value co-creation opportunities to enhance marketing  
28 activities. The insight provided by S-D logic acts as a key theoretical lens to explore this potential  
29 further. Formally stated, the principal objective of this research is to explore the value of social  
30 networking sites in marketing activities **within the hotel industry**.

### 36 37 **3. Research methodology**

38 A qualitative, interpretative research approach was employed. Nascent research has employed  
39 qualitative techniques as a means of studying social media marketing (Hays *et al.*, 2013; Tsimonis  
40 and Dimitriadis, 2014; Valos *et al.*, 2016; Whiting and Williams, 2013). Qualitative studies are suited  
41 to social media marketing given the lack of concrete knowledge in the area (Tsimonis and  
42 Dimitriadis, 2014). Moreover, qualitative research in the area of social media provides advantages  
43 over alternative approaches such as social media monitoring due to the ability to engage in a direct  
44 and interactive conversation with research participants, to observe the underlying dialogue and to  
45 build a rapport with respondents that leads to further relevant insights into the social media  
46 phenomenon (Branthwaite and Patterson, 2011).

47  
48 The hotel industry was selected for the research. Customer expectations in the hotel  
49 industry are constantly changing and the challenge presented to hotels is to anticipate these  
50 changes and provide a superior experience to customers (Chathoth *et al.*, 2012; Shaw *et al.*, 2011).  
51 Social media are increasingly being proposed as a means of overcoming these challenges (Shaw *et al.*,  
52 2011; Sigala, 2016), yet academic research is lacking (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Line and Runyan, 2012).  
53 Thus, exploring the value of SNSs in marketing activities in the hotel industry is warranted.

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55 The online presence of hotels in the Republic of Ireland was examined to determine if they  
56 had established an active SNS presence. If SNS use demonstrated that SNSs were employed in hotel  
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3 marketing efforts, the senior managers of those hotels were contacted to take part in the study.  
4 Hence, a purposive sample of senior managers from hotels who use SNSs in their marketing efforts  
5 in the Republic of Ireland was selected. If the senior manager contacted was not the most relevant  
6 person to interview in relation to the use of SNSs in hotel marketing efforts, they were asked to  
7 identify the colleague who was. This key informant approach has been employed in previous social  
8 media studies of a qualitative nature as a means of gaining access to respondents who are  
9 responsible for or have detailed knowledge of social media implementation within their  
10 organisations (Valos *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, this approach is common in the hotel industry  
11 (Haugland *et al.*, 2007, Qu *et al.*, 2005).  
12

13  
14 A total of 14 in-depth interviews were conducted. At this point, a pattern had emerged and  
15 no new themes arose. Hence, it was assumed that saturation point had been reached. Research has  
16 illustrated that data saturation can be achieved after the analysis of a similar number of interviews  
17 (Guest *et al.*, 2006; Stiehler, 2016). Relevant interviewee and hotel details are presented in Table 1.  
18

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21 Insert Table 1 here  
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24 Due to the limited amount of research in the area of social media marketing, an  
25 unstructured approach was employed whereby open-ended questions were put forward to  
26 respondents in relation to the role of SNSs in marketing in their respective hotels. The value of the  
27 in-depth interview lies in the ability to explore phenomena, to adapt the interview to the respondent  
28 and their organisational context and to probe deeper into responses where necessary. Furthermore,  
29 the complexity of topics can be explored in a flexible manner, with interviewees afforded the  
30 opportunity to speak freely (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Thus, an unstructured approach allowed  
31 interviewee behaviour and beliefs in relation to social media marketing to be understood. According  
32 to the needs of the study, participants were asked to discuss how important they felt SNSs are in  
33 their marketing activities, how they engage with customers using SNSs and the value of SNSs in  
34 engaging with customers. Notably, four thematic areas that emerged from literature were discussed.  
35 The first category, customer interaction and engagement, was developed based on the body of  
36 literature that draws attention to the opportunity for businesses to employ SNSs as a means of  
37 engaging with customers on a deeper level (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2010; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015).  
38 Literature highlights that the heightened engagement afforded by social technologies can provide  
39 key customer insight (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2013), resulting in the second category of customer insights.  
40 Literature also draws attention to the value of customer insights as a means of co-creating customer  
41 value and the role of social technologies in achieving this co-creation of value (Centeno and Wang,  
42 2016; Okazaki *et al.*, 2015; Singaraju *et al.*, 2016). This resulted in the development of category  
43 three, value co-creation. The final category developed was the power of TripAdvisor, in light of the  
44 literature that draws attention to the impact of TripAdvisor reviews on hotel choice and popularity  
45 (Casaló *et al.*, 2015; Xie *et al.*, 2016). Participants were asked to draw on experience as appropriate.  
46 Given the key informant approach adopted, participants would be privy to such detailed  
47 information. These issues were then discussed in detail. Each interview lasted approximately 60  
48 minutes.  
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51 Numerous steps were taken by the researcher to increase the reliability of the interview  
52 process. To minimise interviewer bias, questions were phrased in a factual manner. With respondent  
53 consent, a dictaphone was also used to record interviews, facilitating more detailed and accurate  
54 interpretation of responses. To minimise interviewee bias, time was spent building a rapport prior to  
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3 the interview process, both in a telephone call arranging the interview and directly before the  
4 interview itself. The hotel in which the interviewee was employed was selected as the location for  
5 the interview so that respondents would be in comfortable and familiar surroundings. Finally, the  
6 nature of the interview was discussed with respondents in the telephone call arranging the  
7 interview, allowing them to be prepared for the interview and aware of the potential themes that  
8 could be addressed (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). To improve validity, the interview process was rehearsed  
9 extensively before field interviews were conducted and every effort made to reduce interviewer and  
10 interviewee bias. These techniques improve the internal validity of the qualitative data collection  
11 and analysis phase. To improve the external validity of the qualitative research phase, a rich account  
12 of the phenomenon under investigation was obtained (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The collection and  
13 comparison of data from numerous sources—in this case 14 key informants—in relation to the same  
14 topic serves to enhance reliability and validity (Hair *et al.*, 2007).  
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18 The data collected were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is suited to the  
19 analysis of both talk and documents (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008). A directed content analysis  
20 approach was employed, in which theory and/or research findings act as a means of coding content  
21 (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Suitable where “existing theory or prior research exists about a  
22 phenomenon that is incomplete or would benefit from further description” (p.1281), the directed  
23 content analysis approach is more structured in nature, with concepts or variables acting as coding  
24 categories. Data obtained can then be allocated to categories, with new categories or sub-categories  
25 developed where necessary. The directed content analysis approach has the benefit of allowing  
26 theory to be supported and extended (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In light of the lack of concrete  
27 knowledge in the area of social media (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014) and the suitability of the  
28 directed content analysis approach for providing further description in relation to a phenomenon  
29 (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), this approach is suited to the study. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) note that  
30 while the application of theory results in a more informed researcher, bias may be a potential issue  
31 where directed content analysis is concerned. Adhering to an accurate coding scheme acts as a  
32 means of reducing this bias. Therefore, every effort was taken to ensure the coding scheme  
33 employed was accurate. Moreover, content was also coded by an additional coder to ensure  
34 accurate classification of the data. This approach, referred to as inter-coder reliability, enhances the  
35 stability and reproducibility of data (Weber, 1990).  
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40 Table 2 illustrates those categories that were developed before and during data analysis,  
41 and the resultant themes that emerged.  
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44 Insert Table 2 here  
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46 As detailed previously and as evidenced in Table 2, four categories were developed based on  
47 literature: customer interaction and engagement, customer insights, value co-creation and the  
48 power of TripAdvisor. Content analysis included audio-textual analysis; pawing through the data;  
49 noting of word repetition relevant to themes; cutting and sorting of relevant keywords and phrases;  
50 observing the use of relevant metaphors and analogies; and noting relevant similarities and  
51 differences across cases (Harrigan *et al.*, 2012). The assignment of words and phrases to relevant  
52 themes in a consistent manner also serves to enhance the reliability of findings (Hair *et al.*, 2007).  
53 Following the directed content analysis approach, findings were organised around the categories  
54 identified (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). A further three categories were developed based on research  
55 findings. The first of these, posting activity, is concerned with the nature of the content posted on  
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3 SNSs by hotels. The next category, importance placed on content, refers to the value placed on the  
4 information that can be collected by hotels via SNSs by hotels. The final category, attitudes towards  
5 TripAdvisor, refers to the attitudes held by hotels in relation to the tourism-specific SNS TripAdvisor.  
6 As analysis progressed, the coding scheme was refined and revised (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005),  
7 resulting in the development of three overarching themes: reactive approach towards SNSs, deeper  
8 customer connections and value co-creation, with original categories serving as subcategories. Inter-  
9 coder reliability tests confirmed these categories and subcategories. These themes are discussed  
10 next.  
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#### 13 14 **4. Findings**

##### 15 *Reactive approach towards SNSs*

16 Although all respondents employed SNSs in their marketing activities, discussion revealed two  
17 distinct approaches in their use, in terms of posting activity, importance placed on content and  
18 attitudes towards TripAdvisor. While the majority of respondents indicated that they capitalised  
19 upon the depth and networked interactions facilitated by SNSs, some respondents indicated that  
20 they did not. Despite the deep and networked interactions afforded by SNSs and the valuable  
21 information that can be garnered from these sites, discussion revealed that some respondents  
22 employed SNSs in a more reactive manner.  
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25 In terms of posting activity, discussion revealed that, for three respondents, posting activity  
26 on SNSs primarily acted as a means of providing information to, rather than engaging with,  
27 respondents. This is exemplified by the following quote:  
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30 'So far it's more of an informative mechanism' (SMM\_01).

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33 'It's an information and sign-posting exercise to make sure that you are known  
34 everywhere so that as least you are gathering as much traffic as you can' (MD\_01).  
35

36  
37 'You are just trying to tell people what's happening in the hotel' (GM\_01).  
38

39 Further discussion with each of these respondents indicated that respondent SMM\_01 did  
40 intend to employ SNSs in a more interactive manner in the near future, particularly as a means of  
41 asking SNS users how they can improve their market offerings. Respondent MD\_01 did not exhibit  
42 any intention of employing SNSs other than as 'an information and sign-posting exercise'.  
43 Respondent GM\_01 noted that they had been more active on SNSs in the past, and while SNSs  
44 'allowed us to broadcast our hotel to an audience worldwide at a fraction of the cost', they had  
45 become 'fatigued' with SNSs. Remaining respondents exhibited a more proactive approach toward  
46 posting on SNSs, evident in subsequent sections.  
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49 In terms of the importance placed on content, respondent GM\_01 noted that while they did  
50 get important information from SNSs, they believed their hotel would still have access to this  
51 information in the absence of SNS activity, highlighted by the following quote:  
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54 'Let's put it this way—if we didn't have Twitter, I would be getting that information  
55 anyway because they might be phoning me or emailing me.'  
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3 Of those respondents who adopted a more reactive than proactive approach towards SNSs,  
4 only a single respondent, MD\_01, explicitly communicated that the value of SNSs in their hotel's  
5 marketing activities was 'negligible' and SNSs were employed merely because 'everyone else is doing  
6 it'. Overall, the respondent felt that SNSs were of minimal use in marketing activities and only served  
7 as a means of providing information to customers rather than obtaining information from them:  
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10 'I feel like you have to be active on it because everyone else is doing it, but the value of  
11 the business that we get out of it is pretty negligible' (MD\_01).  
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14 Some respondents also revealed less proactive attitudes towards TripAdvisor. Respondents  
15 raised concerns about complaints posted on TripAdvisor. As noted by one respondent (SMM\_01),  
16 'TripAdvisor for us seems to be more of a page to air your grievances at the moment. So we tend to  
17 take TripAdvisor with a pinch of salt'. One respondent (MD\_01) noted that complaints on  
18 TripAdvisor were not beneficial to their hotel as they occur after the customer has left: hence, they  
19 cannot resolve the problem for that particular customer, the hotel's reputation being damaged as a  
20 result of the complaint. This respondent felt that 'there's no hotelier in the world that will tell you  
21 they like TripAdvisor'. This respondent also felt that 'it's only the cranks that go up'. Another  
22 respondent (M\_01) felt that while the information provided by people on TripAdvisor is relevant,  
23 'TripAdvisor is becoming too many people thinking they are critics'. These 'critics' can in turn impact  
24 the hotel's TripAdvisor ranking, reflecting badly on the hotel given that people will look at  
25 TripAdvisor before making a booking.  
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### 30 *Deeper customer connections*

31 Many respondents drew attention to the deeper customer connections that could be achieved  
32 using SNSs. Respondents drew attention to the enhanced customer interaction and engagement  
33 capabilities facilitated by SNSs. The deep interaction capabilities afforded by SNSs allowed  
34 respondents to engage with customers on a more personal level, simultaneously allowing this to be  
35 achieved on a large scale, too.  
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39 'There's a personal touch. Because that's really what social networking allows you to  
40 do on a huge scale that you would never be able to do by any other platform, to  
41 directly engage with people personally like that' (MM\_01).  
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44 'What we're finding is people are contacting us through the medium that they are  
45 accessing quite regularly, which is Facebook' (DSM\_01).  
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48 Interview proceedings demonstrated that deeper customer connections could be achieved  
49 with customers both pre- and post-visit. Discussing pre-visit activity, some respondents noted that  
50 the increasing popularity of SNSs has led to customers using these sites to announce their arrival in  
51 advance of their stay. As noted by one respondent (MM\_02), customers like to identify with their  
52 favourite hotel or restaurant and social media gives them an opportunity to do that. As a result, the  
53 connection they have with the hotel deepens. SNSs have afforded hotels the ability to interact with  
54 customers and develop relationships before they even enter the hotel, allowing hotels to use this to  
55 enhance the customer experience. One respondent (M\_01) noted that interacting with customers  
56 via SNSs to acknowledge their upcoming stay has the benefit of demonstrating to others that the  
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3 hotel cares for and engages with its customers. Another respondent (GM\_01) noted that they  
4 would often use comments made on SNSs as a conversation starter with customers upon their  
5 arrival at the hotel. Essentially, the hotel has 'an excuse to tap them on the shoulder and say hi and  
6 thanks very much for your tweets'. A small gesture such as this can then lead to those customers  
7 engaging in marketing activities on SNSs on behalf of the hotel, such as posting pictures of their  
8 stay. The same respondent (GM\_01) also noted that 'it really strengthens ... the connection with  
9 the customer, more so than ever before'.

10  
11 Post-visit, SNSs also act as a means of strengthening customer relationships and deriving  
12 valuable customer insights. For many interviewees, the deeper customer connections afforded by  
13 SNSs provide the ability to gain a greater understanding of customer expectations and perceptions  
14 of the service experienced. Respondents outlined the willingness of customers to use SNS platforms  
15 to interact with their hotel and other customers to communicate their opinions about their stay,  
16 divulging what they liked and disliked. As communicated by one respondent (SE\_01), 'it's another  
17 platform where people like to tell you certain things or where they would like to see an  
18 improvement'. Another respondent (SMA\_01) drew attention to the tendency of some customers  
19 to use SNSs as a means of informing others about their stay. Thus, in the era of social media,  
20 excelling in the service provided to customers is essential. It reflects well upon the hotel if that  
21 person tells others about how enjoyable their stay was using social media, given the influence it has  
22 on customer choice. According to respondent MM\_01, the ability to converse with customers after  
23 their stay and acquire feedback from them is a key benefit offered by SNSs, even if implementing  
24 some/all of the suggestions made by customers is not feasible. The process of interacting with  
25 customers in more depth is in itself an advantage, the result, as highlighted by respondent MM\_01,  
26 being that 'the perception people have is that you are actively interested in what they want and  
27 what they need'. The owner of one hotel felt that people are often quicker to provide feedback  
28 using SNSs as the pressure of face-to-face contact is removed. As outlined by another respondent  
29 (GM\_01), 'you are learning more about what people are looking for but you are also learning about  
30 what their experience has been'. Additionally, another respondent (O\_01) noted that 'social media  
31 certainly gives you a much better handle on what people want and what people are like. People  
32 don't realise how much it tells about them. They really don't'.

33  
34 Many respondents noted the power of TripAdvisor when it comes to acquiring such  
35 information and using this information to develop deeper customer connections. As outlined by  
36 respondent MD\_02, 'the power of TripAdvisor is phenomenal'. As noted by another respondent  
37 (SMA\_01), given the popularity of TripAdvisor, being active on it is essential. They communicated  
38 that 'it's that crucial because just everybody, from my experience, always goes to TripAdvisor'.  
39 Furthermore, respondent MD\_02 highlighted that while customers may draw attention to negative  
40 aspects of their stay on TripAdvisor, 'to be honest, it's more important for us to know about the  
41 bad stuff than the good stuff because if you don't know about it, you can't do anything to prevent  
42 it'. Respondent MM\_01 highlighted that 'every TripAdvisor review that comes in we will analyse in  
43 detail'. In particular, respondents noted that TripAdvisor acts as a key means of learning more  
44 about their business from the customer's perspective as well as enabling them to identify and  
45 prioritise areas of concern. Notably, respondents outlined the power of TripAdvisor for identifying  
46 service improvement opportunities:  
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56 'It's a great forum for us to gauge where we are as a business, changes we need to  
57 make, improvements we need to make and training and so on' (DSM\_01).  
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4 'The power of TripAdvisor is phenomenal. And if you get a bad review up there, from  
5 my point of view, I will be in there trying to find out what happened...we would  
6 actively try to engage with people and try to find out what happened and try to make  
7 good if the experience is bad because at the end of the day, people have paid good  
8 money for a service' (MD\_02).  
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11 One respondent (SMA\_01) also noted that the information provided via SNSs is more  
12 accurate given that some customers may be too reluctant to articulate their dissatisfaction in  
13 person to a manager. Therefore, through review platforms such as TripAdvisor, 'you are getting the  
14 real story'. This respondent also noted that customers 'will give you a list. Honestly, they will give  
15 you nearly two pages of what you could be doing better'. This was echoed by respondent SMM\_02,  
16 who also drew attention to the power of TripAdvisor over a hotel's reputation:  
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20 'TripAdvisor is more upfront and one bad comment can ruin your business' (SMM\_02).  
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### 23 *Value co-creation*

24 Respondents noted that it was important not only to collate customer information from SNSs, but  
25 also to apply that information where possible to improve the service offered to customers. Hence,  
26 the information generated from the deeper customer connections achieved as a result of using SNSs  
27 acts as a key means of co-creating value with customers. For example:  
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30 'Any information you glean I think in this day and age is hugely important and anyone  
31 who is involved in marketing who doesn't take that information on board is really not  
32 in the real world' (MD\_02).  
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35 'Without customers you don't have a hotel, so if you are not taking on board the  
36 feedback—whether it is coming from a social networking site, whether it's been posted  
37 on TripAdvisor or a letter that's come in from a guest—if you completely ignore that,  
38 you are not going to be able to improve your product and you're not going to be able to  
39 get those customers back. So, you definitely need to take all of that information and  
40 marry it all together' (SMM\_01).  
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44 Respondents provided numerous examples of how they had applied the information  
45 generated from SNSs to enhance the service provided to customers. In relation to market offerings,  
46 respondents indicated that collaborative interactions with customers on SNSs led to some notable  
47 changes in relation to the dining experience and room amenities. For example, changes to the  
48 customer dining experience included changing breakfast offerings to incorporate a new and better  
49 range of cold foods. There were also changes to the dinner menu with the addition of vegetarian  
50 options, specific meats and local produce. Respondent MD\_02 communicated that they had  
51 implemented a system in the hotel to improve the customer breakfast experience. Customers had  
52 drawn attention to the very lengthy wait for tables at breakfast time: as a result, a system was  
53 implemented at the front desk. This system outlined busy and quiet breakfast times to make  
54 customers aware of those times where they may have to wait. Changes made in relation to room  
55 refurbishment included new furniture, mattresses, quilts and the modernisation of rooms. Further,  
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3 respondent DSM\_01 noted that customer feedback had resulted in a significant financial investment  
4 in the public areas of their hotel as a means of enhancing the customer experience. The respondent  
5 also communicated that customer collaborations resulted in the addition of Wi-Fi in their hotel. Also,  
6 customer interactions revealed that allocated pool time for children did not suit families, a key  
7 target market, resulting in time changes better suited to the needs and wants of that customer  
8 segment.  
9

10 One respondent (SMM\_01) noted that interactions with customers had resulted in changes  
11 to the exterior of their hotel. Customers had expressed concerns in relation to walking to the car  
12 park at night and the level of car park security. As a result, the hotel installed lights on the walkway  
13 to the car park, employed a car park warden and installed a barrier in the back car park. Respondent  
14 SMA\_01 noted that customer suggestions played a significant role in the addition of new products to  
15 their hotel spa. Moreover, customers had suggested a Prosecco reception for residents booking in  
16 for afternoon retreats. The respondent noted that upon implementing this idea, the hotel received  
17 rave reviews. Discussion also revealed that respondents were increasingly using SNSs as a means of  
18 employing customers as collaborators in developing promotional activities for their hotels. For  
19 example, respondents would often collaborate with customers to develop competitions, packages  
20 and special offers. This 'marketing with' approach was an effective and efficient way to deepen  
21 customer connections through the development of target-specific service propositions.  
22

23 Interview proceedings demonstrated that respondents felt it was important to implement  
24 the feedback and suggestions that emerged from customer interactions as a means of strengthening  
25 customer bonds. Acting upon the information demonstrates to customers that they are important  
26 and that every effort is being made to deliver a quality service. Furthermore, it motivates others to  
27 interact with the hotel, knowing that their feedback is valued. This is illustrated by the following  
28 comments made by respondents:  
29

30 'It's not just empty questions. Their information is actually being used and I think that  
31 encourages more people to interact and get involved' (MM\_01).  
32

33 'It's to say to the customer we really appreciate you taking the time out to let us know  
34 because now we can do something about it' (MD\_02).  
35

36 One respondent also detailed that when customers provide ideas and suggestions via social  
37 media, they will reply to that customer to inform them that those ideas and suggestions have been  
38 acted upon and that the customer will have an opportunity to see that if they come and visit again:  
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40 'So you are putting the emphasis on them—YOU have made a difference to our hotel'  
41 (SMA\_01).  
42

43 One respondent (DSM\_01) also noted that feedback posted on SNSs by customers allowed  
44 them to illustrate customer problems to senior management. They drew on the example of hotel  
45 rooms that were in need of refurbishment and the tendency of customers to note this on SNSs.  
46

47 'As a result of TripAdvisor and so on, we were able to go and suggest to the board that  
48 this is becoming a problem. It's out on a public forum and its coming back through our  
49 own customer feedback' (DSM\_01).  
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4 Respondents also drew attention to the reality that not all ideas and suggestions proposed by  
5 customers were viable due to financial and/or practical constraints. Where implementing ideas or  
6 suggestions was not possible, respondents stated that it was important to engage with customers to  
7 explain why implementation was not possible and to acknowledge and thank customers for their  
8 input. Respondents felt that this was an essential activity in order to strengthen customer  
9 relationships.  
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## 12 13 **5. Discussion and implications**

### 14 *Theoretical implications*

15 As outlined by Ngai *et al.* (2015: 33), “the phenomenon of social media remains new to academia”.  
16 Hence, this study contributes to the need for literature in an emergent and fragmented area (Felix *et*  
17 *al.*, 2016). Specifically, literature has drawn attention to the need for research demonstrating the  
18 marketing effectiveness of social media (Leung *et al.*, 2015) and the impact of interactive social  
19 media activities on the customer-brand relationship (Hudson *et al.*, 2016). This study contributes  
20 significantly to these gaps, illustrating the marketing effectiveness of SNSs and the subsequent  
21 ability to employ SNSs as a means of achieving deeper connections with customers. Notably, findings  
22 illustrate that SNSs facilitate the development of customer-brand relationships, both pre- and post-  
23 visit. This study demonstrates that the deeper connections facilitated by SNSs significantly facilitate  
24 co-creative activity, resulting in more innovative product, service and experience offerings.  
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28 The present study contributes specifically to hospitality-related social media literature. Line  
29 and Runyan (2012: 483) accentuate that “despite the explosion of social media and the emergent  
30 Web 2.0 phenomenon in recent years, very little attention has been given to the marketing  
31 applications of these phenomena within the hospitality field”. This has been echoed by subsequent  
32 research (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2013; Hudson *et al.*, 2015; Kandampully *et al.*, 2015; Kim *et al.*, 2015;  
33 Melián-González and Bulchand-Gidumal, 2016). This study contributes to this gap, illustrating the  
34 manner in which customers can be marketed to in the social media era. This is essential given the  
35 increasing focus on social media as a means of enhancing the customer experience (Sigala, 2016).  
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### 38 39 *Practical implications*

40 The findings of this study have important implications for practitioners. Customers are increasingly  
41 turning to SNSs as a means of sourcing information and interacting with customers and businesses  
42 alike. The enhanced interactions afforded by SNSs provide a means of connecting with customers on  
43 a deeper level. It is these deeper interactions that form the basis of lasting relationships. Many  
44 respondents drew attention to the fact that the connectedness offered by SNSs facilitated customer  
45 engagement in a manner that was not previously possible, both before and after a customer’s stay.  
46 Notably, respondents drew attention to the ability to create a memorable first impression with  
47 customers upon entering their hotel when they announced their upcoming stay on SNSs. This  
48 enhanced experience not only had the benefit of strengthening bonds with those customers, but  
49 could also result in positive word-of-mouth from those customers. Consequently, the deeper  
50 customer connection achieved using SNSs results in referral value. The ability to continue  
51 interactions with customers after their stay using SNSs acts a key means of maintaining customer  
52 relationships. Hence, this study highlights the value of social CRM for marketing managers. Research  
53 findings therefore demonstrate that “perhaps more than ever before, effectively managing  
54 customer relationships through social media has the potential to dramatically influence firm  
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3 performance because these applications can increase customer engagement and the value created  
4 from these interactions” (Trainor, 2012: 319).

5 Findings also highlight that the deep and networked interactions afforded by SNSs provide a  
6 means of acquiring valuable feedback. This feedback can be applied to enhance the experience  
7 offered to customers, thus allowing managers to create and deliver a service more in line with  
8 customer needs and wants. Therefore, SNSs represent a powerful information source. Moreover,  
9 findings illustrate that respondents felt that the information garnered from SNSs was more reflective  
10 of customers’ actual experiences. In effect, SNSs provide managers with the ‘real story’, given the  
11 removal of any pressure that might be felt by customers in a face-to-face context. SNSs provide a key  
12 mechanism for assessing customers’ true feelings towards the service they offer. However, to  
13 acquire this information, managers must interact with their customers, collate information from  
14 these interactions, and garner information posted on SNSs beyond company-customer interactions  
15 alone. Interestingly, this study illustrates that where it is not feasible to act upon the feedback  
16 provided by customers on SNSs, the platforms themselves provide a mechanism to voice this to  
17 customers on a large scale, with such transparency also serving to strengthen company-customer  
18 bonds. As a result, managers benefit from employing SNS as a customer service mechanism. The  
19 approach adopted by managers will impact whether the aforementioned benefits can be achieved.  
20 Those managers who post content to engage with customers and have a positive attitude towards  
21 SNSs will reap greater benefits than those who do not.  
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## 27 28 **6. Limitations and future research**

29 This study has several limitations. Firstly, this study is exploratory in nature, with the aim of  
30 exploring the value of SNSs in marketing activities **within the hotel industry**. As such, findings cannot  
31 be generalised. A larger quantitative study is therefore recommended. While this study provides an  
32 important starting point, further research is necessary to validate findings. Secondly, while  
33 respondents provide key insights into the manner in which they utilise SNSs within their respective  
34 hotels, customers’ perspectives of how successful these social media marketing efforts are would be  
35 a valuable addition to this under-researched area. Thirdly, while this research addresses the lack of  
36 social media marketing research in the hospitality industry (Cabiddu *et al.*, 2013; Hudson *et al.*,  
37 2016), future research could address different industries. Finally, the findings of this study illustrate  
38 that the effective use of social media can positively influence customer interactions, engagement  
39 and value co-creation. As outlined by Wilcox and Moore (2016: 363), “while social media spending  
40 continues to increase, measuring its impact remains a challenge for most organisations, with  
41 surprisingly few able to access the quantitative impact on business outcomes”. Future research  
42 would benefit from examining the extent to which companies are measuring the return on  
43 investment of their social media marketing efforts.  
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Respondent Number	Role in the hotel	Years in Position	Star Rating of Hotel	Number of Rooms in Hotel	Code
1	Manager	4-6 years	4	100-199	M_01
2	General Manager	4-6 years	5	1-99	GM_01
3	Sales and Marketing Manager	1-3 years	3	200-349	SMM_01
4	Managing Director	7-10 years	4	1-99	MD_01
5	Sales Executive	1-3 years	4	100-199	SE_01
6	Sales and Marketing Manager	Over 10 years	2	1-99	SMM_02
7	Marketing Manager	1-3 years	3	1-99	MM_01
8	Director of Sales and Marketing	4-6 years	4	1-99	DSM_01
9	Sales and Marketing Manager	1-3 years	3	1-99	SMM_03
10	Sales and Marketing Assistant	1-3 years	4	1-99	SMA_01
11	Marketing Manager	4-6 years	4	100-199	MM_02
12	Owner	1-3 years	3	1-99	O_01
13	Sales and Marketing Manager	1-3 years	3	1-99	SMM_04
14	Marketing Director	7-10 years	3	1-99	MD_02

Table 1: Interviewee and hotel details

Category	Developed before data analysis	Developed during data analysis	Theme
Customer interaction and engagement	✓		Deeper customer connections
Customer insights	✓		Deeper customer connections
Value co-creation	✓		Value co-creation
Power of TripAdvisor	✓		Deeper customer connections
Posting activity		✓	Reactive Approach towards SNSs
Importance placed on content		✓	Reactive Approach towards SNSs
Attitudes towards TripAdvisor		✓	Reactive Approach towards SNSs

Table 2: Interview themes

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Reviewer 1	Response
<p>Comments: A much improved transcript, especially from the methodology perspective.</p>	Thank you for this comment.
<p>Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?:  Though not my area of expertise, I believe that this research adds to the existing literature as well as to the practical implications pertaining to the hotel industry.</p>	Thank you for this comment.
<p>Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored?:  Yes, given the limited amount of research available in this area.</p>	Thank you for this comment.
<p>Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts, or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?:  A substantial improvement. The addition of table 2 certainly helps to identify how the 3 themes identified in the findings came to be. Additionally, quotes have been added to substantiate these themes.</p>	Thank you for this comment.
<p>Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?:  Yes, the additional quotes certainly help to substantiate the analysis.</p>	Thank you for this comment.
<p>Implications for research practice and/or society: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for research, practice and/or society? Does the paper bridge the gap between theory and practice? How can the research be used in practice (economic and commercial impact), in teaching, to influence public policy, in research (contributing to the body of knowledge)? What is the impact upon society (influencing public attitudes, affecting quality of life)? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?:  I believe that the practical implications presented in this paper could be of very good use to members of the hotel industry.</p>	Thank you for this comment.

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<p>Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the field and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc.:</p> <p>Well written and presented.</p>	<p>Again, thank you for this comment.</p>
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Reviewer 2	Response
<p>Comments:</p> <p>1) You use the term "S-D logic" on page 4 without having ever identified this as service-dominant logic. You go on to explain this in the next section, but it would be helpful to have a CLEAR definition before doing so.</p> <p>2) I'd eliminate the bullet point on page 5, incorporating this into the preceding sentence. Further, I would rewrite this as "to explore the value of social networking sites in marketing activities WITHIN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY."</p> <p>3) In the second sentence of section 6 (limitations and future research), I would add the same phrase: "within the hotel industry."</p> <p>Thank you for the revisions you made to the paper in accordance with the reviewers recommendations, and good luck with your future research!</p>	<p>Thank you for these valuable comments. As a result, we have made the following changes:</p> <p>1) We have now identified the term S-D logic as the service-dominant logic on page 4. "This research employs the <b>service-dominant (S-D)</b> logic as a theoretical lens to examine the value of SNSs in hotel marketing activities."</p> <p>2) The bullet point on page 5 has now been removed and this sentence incorporated into the preceding sentence. Also, thank you for the suggestion regarding the inclusion of 'within the hotel industry'. This has now been added to fully reflect the principle objective of the research. "Formally stated, the principal objective of this research is to explore the value of social networking sites in marketing activities <b>within the hotel industry.</b>"</p> <p>3) This has now also been added to the second sentence of section 6. "Firstly, this study is exploratory in nature, with the aim of exploring the value of SNSs in marketing activities <b>within the hotel industry.</b>"</p> <p>Thank you for this comment. We very much hope that our revised paper will be published in this prestigious journal.</p>
<p>Originality: Does the paper contain new and significant information adequate to justify publication?:</p> <p>Yes, the paper makes a clear and significant contribution to the academic literature regarding social networking sites and social media in the hospitality industry.</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment.</p>

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<p>Relationship to Literature: Does the paper demonstrate an adequate understanding of the relevant literature in the field and cite an appropriate range of literature sources? Is any significant work ignored?:</p> <p>Yes, the work is well-supported through appropriate and diverse cites.</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment.</p>
<p>Methodology: Is the paper's argument built on an appropriate base of theory, concepts, or other ideas? Has the research or equivalent intellectual work on which the paper is based been well designed? Are the methods employed appropriate?:</p> <p>Yes, the research methods are appropriated.</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment.</p>
<p>Results: Are results presented clearly and analysed appropriately? Do the conclusions adequately tie together the other elements of the paper?:</p> <p>Yes, and thank you for more clearly identifying the respondents to the study.</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment.</p>
<p>Implications for research, practice and/or society: Does the paper identify clearly any implications for research, practice and/or society? Does the paper bridge the gap between theory and practice? How can the research be used in practice (economic and commercial impact), in teaching, to influence public policy, in research (contributing to the body of knowledge)? What is the impact upon society (influencing public attitudes, affecting quality of life)? Are these implications consistent with the findings and conclusions of the paper?:</p> <p>Thank you for identifying both theoretical and practical implications of the paper. Also, thank you for re-working (adding) the limitations section.</p>	<p>Thank you for this comment.</p>
<p>Quality of Communication: Does the paper clearly express its case, measured against the technical language of the field and the expected knowledge of the journal's readership? Has attention been paid to the clarity of expression and readability, such as sentence structure, jargon use, acronyms, etc.:</p> <p>Yes, thank you especially for hiring a proof-reader. The paper is MUCH more reader friendly in this revision.</p>	<p>Again, thank you for this comment. We are delighted that you think the paper is now much more reader friendly as a result of us investing in the services of a professional proof-reader.</p>

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