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***The role of Social Media Marketing in Hotel Marketing.
How the hotels in Oia Santorini use the Facebook as
part of their Marketing Strategy.***

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management at the International Hellenic University.

Oia Santorini hotels need to focus on social media marketing and to include it in their marketing strategy. Facebook offers a great variety of opportunities in order hotels to enrich their marketing strategy. The research of the current use of Facebook as a marketing tool by eight five-star hotels in Oia showed presence in Facebook and use of basic features. Nevertheless, the use of different features of Facebook varied. This had the result some hotels to use Facebook more effectively than the others.

Fani Karampini

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Introduction

Social media developed into an e-Marketing tool that helps companies to access the market, be informed about customer trends and communicate with customers (Holzner, 2009) in a way that could be inverted into market share and revenue (Albee, 2010).

Facebook emerged as the leader of social media with 2.13 billion monthly users (Facebook, online). This shows the direct influence of a huge part of global population.

However, just using Facebook does not ensure absolute marketing success. The use of Facebook requires a strategy for achieving satisfying results (Silk, 2006; Stokes, 2009). It is very important to be realistic with the expectations about the results in marketing of using Facebook (Treadway and Smith, 2010) because the results depend on the well use of this marketing tool (Hsu, 2012).

Literature Review

A. Introduction

With the evolution of internet from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0, new internet technologies emerged. The development of social media owned to the ability of Web 2.0 for a two-way communication. People like using social media because they take advantage of its capabilities.

However, social media did not evolved only communication, but also it developed marketing science. Social media marketing gives the ability to companies to attract customers in an easier and more directly way and to build a relationship with them.

B. Social media

“Social media is a very powerful customer service and communication vehicle where our brands and customers can come together to have open and honest conversations.

It’s less about pushing our hotels and promotions and more about connecting our core brand with our guests’ daily lives.”

David Godsman

Vice president of global Web strategy for Starwood Hotels

1. Definition

Chan and Guillet (2011, p 347) define social media “as a group of Internet-based applications that exist on the Web 2.0 platform and enable the Internet users from all over the world to interact, communicate and share ideas, content, thoughts, experiences, perspectives, information and relationships”.

Analyzing the meaning of the term ‘social media’ it can come out from the two words which constitute it. On the one hand, media refers to the communication and advertising of ideas or information via publications/channels. On the other hand, social refers to the interaction of users within a group or community. So, taken both terms together, social media can be considered as communication/publication platforms which are generated and sustained by the interpersonal interaction of users via the specific medium or tool (Neti, 2011).

In other words, as Quaman (2009) and Tuten (2008) said, “social media refers to *participatory, conversational and fluid* online communities” which focused mainly on user-generated content (Buchalis & Law, 2008; Buss & Strauss, 2009; Ruzic & Bilos, 2010; Schegg et al., 2008; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Hays, Page and Buchalis (2012, p 213) describe that “the line of communication does not follow exclusively the direction to producer-to-consumer, but can be consumer-to-consumer, and consumer-to-producer, as well as many-to-one, one-to-many, one-to-one or many-to-many”.

Additionally, Solis (online) cleverly said that “Social Media is also called the democratization of information as it can transform people from content readers into content publishers”.

As this content—in the form of words, text, pictures, and videos—is created by millions of users around the world, it can be considered that it creates value (Muniz & Schau, 2011).

The reason that social media are so popular is based to the fact that users can interact and share information (Papazolomou & Melanthiou, 2017). As Neti (2011, p2) mentioned “it uses the ‘wisdom of crowds’ to connect information in a collaborative manner”. And as Berthon et al. (2012, p 264) clarifies “this means that the real power of social media ecosystem is that *we are all connected*”.

2.The media which are social media

Social media are categorized into blogs, cooperative projects (such as Wikipedia), social networking sites (such as Facebook), content communities (such as YouTube), virtual social worlds (such as Second Life), virtual game worlds (such as World of Warcraft; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, 62), and microblogging (such as Twitter; Borges 2009, 45) (Akar & Topcu, 2011).

3.Web 2.0

Social media could be created due to a new version of World Wide Web (www), the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0.

As Akar and Topcu (2011, p 39) say “Web 2.0, as an umbrella term in the heart of emerging technologies, trends, and principles, has changed not only what the Web contains but also how the Web works”. It brought an unparalleled change in the online users’ behavior. One of the main differences between the “traditional” Web (Web 1.0) and Web 2.0 is that the user creates the content and there is high interaction among Internet users (Akar & Topcu, 2011). In the past, websites were mainly static, personal, and written by the website owner in such a way that internet users could only see the web content (Adebanjo & Michaelides, 2010; O’Reilly, 2005). On the contrary, in Web 2.0, websites are interactive, collaborative, dynamic and users can be active by shaping and enriching the content (Chang & Guillet, 2011). But the most valuable is that users can instantly send text, images, audio, and video without any technical knowledge and they allow simultaneous sharing in reality. This means that the content is distributed without ownership or management (Postman 2008).

Even though, the terms “Web 2.0” and “social media” can be used in place of one another, there are some light differences of these two concepts (Akar & Topcu, 2011). As Constantinides and Fountain (2008, p 232) declared “Web 2.0 mostly refers to online applications, whereas the term social media refers to the social aspects of Web 2.0 applications”. Additionally, Osimo (2008, p 17) linked Web 2.0 as “social software, social computing, participative Web, and UGC”.

4.Travel 2.0

Tourism is a sector which is very tightly connected with the new information and communication technologies. So, tourism managers (such as of a DMO, a hotel or any other tourism related company) can benefit from “a good understanding of the quality and quantity of the mechanisms for spreading information online” and to market effectively their company online (Buchalis 1998, pp 409-421).

The Internet has dramatically changed the way tourism is related with distributed information and how people plan and consume travel (Buhalis & Law, 2008). It is no surprise that one of the most popular issues in social media is the topics about travel and tourism. Destinations, travel plans, hotels reviews, tourist guides, suggestions for restaurants or exhibitions are topics with a great volume of discussion in social media. So, this resulted to the emerging of the term Travel 2.0 as a paraphrase of the term Web 2.0 and focused on tourism sector. The term Travel 2.0 was an invention by Philip C. Wolf (president and CEO of PhoCusWright, a leading consultancy firm in the tourism arena) signaling a cultural change in the tourism world (Miguens, Baggio & Costa, 2008).

5.Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

“Give everyone the power to share anything with anyone.”

Mark Zuckerberg

Co-founder, Chairman & CEO of Facebook

It is common known that the lack of direct experience with a tourism product is a crucial issue. This means that the perceived benefits and the quality of tourism and hospitality products cannot be evaluated before the consumption of the product (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). As tourism-related products and services are well-differentiated in nature, high involvement and high-priced, travelers usually review and ask for various kind of information in the travel planning process trying to minimize the risk of making wrong decisions (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). Among all these various forms of travel information, word of mouth (WOM) is one of the most important external information sources for travel planning due to its high perceived credibility (Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2007).

Based Leung et al. (2013, p 8) “Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), or so-called User Generated Content (UGC), is a new form of WOM that serves similar informational needs by offering non-commercial, detailed, and experiential information”. More analytically and according to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p 39), eWOM communication refers to “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”.

It can be assumed that WOM and eWom are the same, however Hartand Blackshaw (2006) claims that WOM can be expanded in a less limited size than a social network. Yoo and Gretzel (2011) also assert that eWOM can spread information beyond one's social circle, namely unknown people can have access to one's information without geographic limitation. Searching information on social media, users not only find travel information from their friends and relatives, with who are connected through social media, but also can find a huge volume of information from internet users around the whole world. The reason that users do this is that they usually interrelate themselves with the other internet users who write the reviews and perceive the products based on the perception of their fellow users or social "friends" (Leung et al., 2013).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2009, p 61) state that

"according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2007), eWOM (or UGC) needs to fulfill three basic requirements in order to be considered as such: first, it needs to be published either on a publicly accessible website or on a social networking site accessible to a selected group of people; second, it needs to show a certain amount of creative effort; and finally, it needs to have been created outside of professional routines and practices".

Moreover Kaplan & Haenlein (2009, p 61) explain that

"the first condition excludes content exchanged in e-mails or instant messages; the second, mere replications of already existing content (e.g., posting a copy of an existing newspaper article on a personal blog without any modifications or commenting); and the third, all content that has been created with a commercial market context in mind".

EWOM communication can take place in many ways: Web-based opinion platforms, discussion forums, boycott Web sites, news groups (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004), posted reviews, mailbags, electronic mailing lists, personal e-mail, chatrooms, instant messaging (Schindler and Bickart 2005), consumer ratings Web sites or forums, blogs, social networking Web sites, and individual Web sites (Akar & Topcu, 2011).

Schlosser (2011), Pavlou and Dimoka (2006) claim that most online reviews are made up of two parts: overall product assessment (i.e., the ratings) and a description of this assessment (i.e., the arguments). Kim, Lim and Brymer (2014, p 165) give the example of a travel website such as TripAdvisor "which allows customers to provide an over-all rating for a hotel's service using a 5-star rating system as well as detailed comments about their experiences".

Nevertheless, the most researched issue of eWOM on social media is the trustworthiness. Burgess, Sellitto, Cox, and Buultjens (2009 p 1) claim that "eWOM is trustworthy since they are the real experience revealed by real people". Additionally, due to the lack of commercial self-interest in eWOM reviews, travelers consider eWOM trustworthy and tend to be more influenced by this type of information than by commercial sources (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2011; Litvin et al., 2008). On the contrary, Sparks and Browning (2011) and Yoo and Gretzel (2010) suggest that "even eWOM on social media is virtually similar to traditional WOM, consumers often perceive eWOM as less trustworthy than WOM". Leung

et al. (2013) explain that “the reason for this perception results from the difficulty of identifying the message source, since eWOM is often created anonymously”.

Blackskaw and Nazzaro (2006) said that “eWOM is owned and controlled by consumers, although it is influenced by traditional marketers and marketing activities”. WOM and eWOM are powerful marketing tools in influencing consumers’ attitudes, product evaluation, customer loyalty, and purchase intentions and decisions (Arndt, 1967; Chan & Ngai, 201; Litvin et al., 2008). Generally, research proves that WOM and eWOM are more influential than conventional marketing tools (Day, 1971; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). Also, WOM and eWOM are considered as one of the key marketing outcomes, which are as important as customer loyalty (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

In conclusion, Qualman (2009) characteristically referred to the term that “the advent of social media and the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 marks the shift from word-of mouth to world-of-mouth”.

6. Why people use social media?

As people are highly social beings, even from the primitive life, they started to live in groups because they had a need to belong. They lived together and worked together—much like what we have even today. Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012, p 321) suggest that “it is a basic biological need to feel belongingness and this feeling can be enjoyed by forming groups”. This is also demonstrated in Mashlow’s theory (1943) who sets belongingness in the third level of people’s needs after physiological and safety needs. This proves the importance of this need in people’s life as after the two first needs, which ensure people’s survival, follows the need of belongingness.

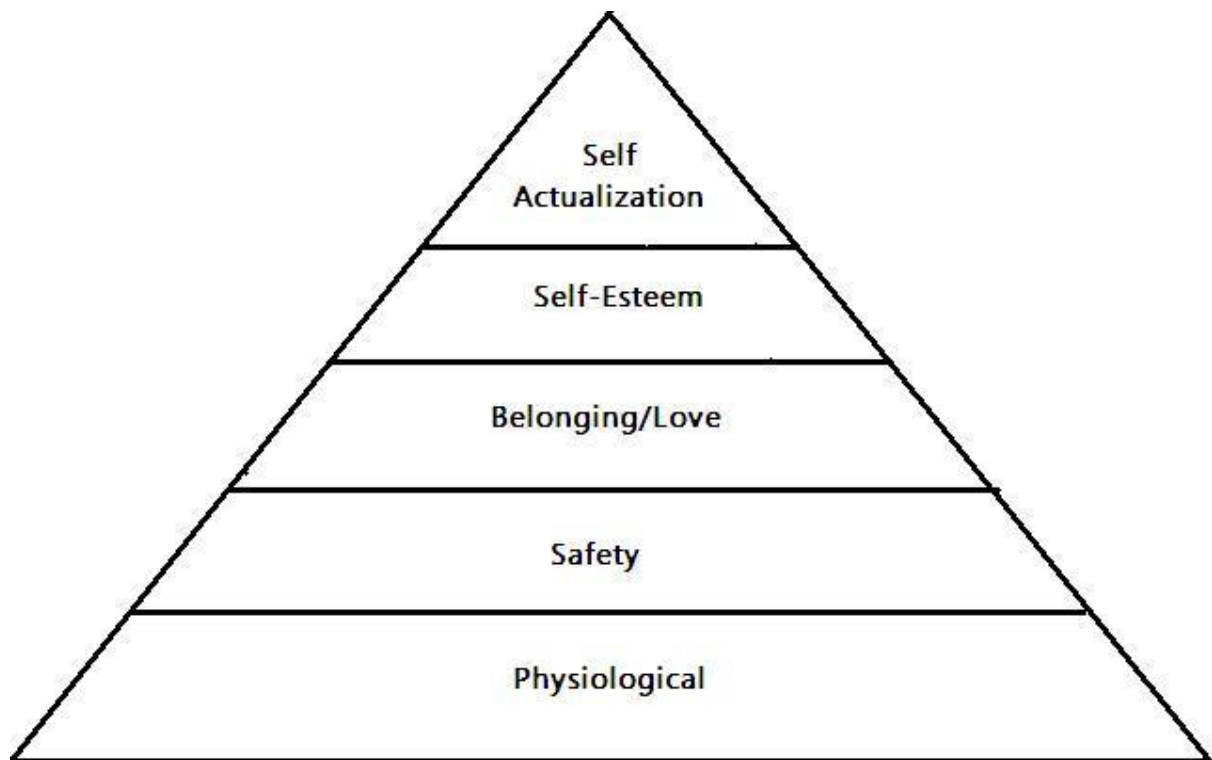


Figure 1: Maslow's hierarchy pyramid

Today these groups are even more enhanced as we belong to a family group, to a work group, as also to a sport group. Papasolomou and Melanthiou (2012) also say that "this advancement has also seen the emergence of these *online groups*". The closeness which we feel within our *real groups*, we can also feel it within our *virtual groups*.

It is obvious that people nowadays communicate in significantly different way with how they used to communicate in the last century. Today nearly a billion people have Internet access and can communicate instantly with others. They can retrieve and analyze information about people and organizations instantly just sharing the information with others. Due to the bidirectional nature of social media, Papasolomou & Melanthiou, (2012, p 322) agree that "consumers have become intermediaries and have the power to filter the message".

Through social media platforms consumers can generate, edit, and share online information about companies, products, and services. They can also participate in online communities and networks where information is out of a business's control (Constantinides, Amo, and Romero, 2010). Akar and Topcu (2011, p 36) suggest that "customers perceive this information as more reliable than straightforward business communication. Hence, peer opinion becomes a major influence on buying behavior".

A research from Google showed that 84% of leisure travelers used the Internet as a planning resource (Torres, 2010). In order to evaluate the likelihood that online travelers use social media content during a web search process, Xiang and Gretzel (2009) report that social media constituted more than 10% of the search results. As the websites which have content which is created by travelers gain more and more popularity, researchers recognize the

importance of social media in the phase of the travel planning process (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Buultjens, 2009; Lo, Mc Kercher, Lo, Cheung, & Law, 2011; Tussyadiah, Park, & Fesenmaier, 2011; Yoo & Gretzel, 2010).

In fact, when consumers plan a trip or make a hotel or restaurant reservation, they usually search online reviews for information (Jeong and Jang 2011; Kim, Mattila, and Baloglu 2011), and many search in internet to choose a restaurant (Kimes 2011). It has been observed that travelers are more likely to trust the reviews and comments posted by other travelers on social media websites than the reviews and comments of travel agent -websites (Pantelidis 2010).

C.Social Media Marketing

1.Definition

First of all, the term marketing is defined by Raza (2005, p 2) as an “ongoing process comprising various coordinated activities a company must perform to develop and/or wanted product, bring it to the market, maintain it there and maximize the customers benefit”. Namely, customer is an essential part of marketing process. So, marketers need to pay attention on their customer’s needs, wants and expectations in order to adjust their services based on customers’ needs so to result in a successful hotel (Russell, 2012).

With the expand of internet the term marketing developed in a new term, the eMarketing. Stokes (2009) claims that a” narrow definition considers eMarketing as using the internet to produce sales”. So, eMarketing is consisted of advertising and selling online. A broader definition by Albee (2010) considers eMarketing as

“the strategic process of establishing online connections with customers to understand their needs as well as employing online tools to create an interactive experience for customers to draw their interest, influence purchasing behavior and affect voluntary sharing of the experience by satisfied consumers”.

Particularly in hotels, Braun (2002) suggests that international eMarketing is very important because tourism industry ensures sales by connecting and interacting with consumers across the globe.

Nowadays, social media results to a further development of marketing, the social media marketing (SMM). Kotler, Bowen & Makens (2006, p 30) believe that “social media marketing shall be defined as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want”. Chan and Guillet (2011, p 347) add that SMM can be achieved “through a set of Internet-based applications that enable interaction, communication, collaboration of user-generated content and hence, sharing of information such as ideas, thoughts, content, and relationships”. Social media marketing is a strategic and methodical process which focuses on the establishment of the company’s influence, reputation and brand within communities of potential customers, readers or supporters. It uses social media to persuade consumers that one's company, products and/or services are

worthwhile (Neti, 2011), namely to promote the company and its products (Barefoot and Szabo 2010, 13).

2.The effects of social media marketing

Schoemaker and Lewis (1999, p 345) state that “for many years hospitality firms have believed that the goal of marketing is to create as many new customers as possible”. They believed that the satisfaction of the customers while they were on the property was very important, however “the real goal was to continue to find new customers; their interest in getting new customers dominated the task of keeping customers”. Nowadays, managers have realized that both aspects are significant; to search for new customers and as also to keep current customers (Russell, 2012). Chen et al (2009) suggest that “companies exploit the internet to become more innovative and effective at this task”.

Neti (2011, p 7) demonstrates that “the role of social media in marketing is to use it as a communication tool that makes the companies accessible to those interested in their product and makes them visible to those that don't know their product”. Social media can be developed in a very useful tool which can create a personality behind the brands and build relationships with customers which could not be achieved in another way. This results not only in obtaining repeat-buyers, but also in creating customer loyalty. As the main target of marketing as a tool is to inform consumers about the products of a company, who the company is and what it offers, social marketing owns an important role in marketing.

Neti (2011, p 9) presents the benefits of using social media. She suggests that,

“firstly, social media can be used to provide an identity about the companies and the products or services that they offer. Secondly, it helps in creating relationships with people who might not otherwise know about the products or service or what the companies represent. Thirdly, it makes companies "real" to consumers. If they want people to follow them they need not just talk about the latest product news but share their personality with them. Fourthly, social media can be used to associate themselves with their peers that may be serving the same target market. And, fifthly, it can be used to communicate and provide the interaction that consumers look for.”

Awareness (2008b, p 41) describes the features of social media marketing.

“These are firstly that, social media marketing consists of multidirectional dialogs. Brands talk to the customers, customers talk to the brands, and—maybe most importantly—customers talk to each other. This situation is a new type of engagement that was impossible before Web 2.0. Secondly, social media marketing is participatory. What makes it social is that it depends on user participation. In order for social media marketing to be realized, user participation is needed. Thirdly, social media marketing is user generated. Most of the content and connections in an online community are created by users, not by the brand.”

Neti (2011, p 6) notices the differences of social media marketing from conventional marketing strategies. She mentioned that,

“social media marketing offers three distinct advantages. One, it provides a window to marketers to not only present products / services to customers but also to listen to customers’ grievances and suggestions. Two, it makes it easy for marketers to identify various peer groups or influencers among various groups, who in turn can become brand evangelist and help in organic growth of a brand. And, three, all this is done at nearly zero cost (as compared to conventional customer outreach programs) as most of the social networking sites are free.”

Furthermore, social media marketing using effectively the time and the resources can offer to the companies a better way of communication with the customers in order to build brand loyalty beyond the traditional methods (Jackson, 2011; Akhtar, 2011). A study by Info-graphics showed that at least 50% of Twitter and Facebook users declare that they have become more likely to discuss, recommend or purchase a company's products after they engaged with the company on social media (Jackson, 2011). Companies can promote their products and services, provide instant support and/or create an online community of brand enthusiasts through all forms of social media such as social networking sites, virtual worlds, content communities, blogs, microblogging sites, forums, online gaming sites, social bookmarking, news sites and more (Zarella, 2010; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Weinberg, 2009). Additionally, social media gives the ability to consumers to share information with their peers about the product and service brands (Stileman, 2009; Mangold and Foulds, 2009). These conversations between the peers give a chance to companies for another cost-effective way to increase brand awareness, boost brand recognition and recall, and increase brand loyalty (Gunelius, 2011). So, it can be considered that social media gives the opportunity to companies to build brand loyalty through networking, conversation, and community building (McKee, 2010). Brand loyalty, in return, brings profitability to the companies, sales revenues, market share, and help them grow or at least maintain themselves in the marketplace (Keller, 2008; Aaker, 1991, Kapferer, 1997), as Cross and Parker (2004) emphasize “in other words to enhance competitive positioning”.

In conclusion, Neti (2011, p 12) mentioned six statements about the importance of social media marketing. Firstly, “SMM is not only about selling, it is more about interacting”. Companies can learn a lot from the consumers. Secondly, “using social media, one can identify consumers, listen to their feedback and use them to improve and innovate on products or services”. Thus, as Hsu (2011, p 974) claims “one can keep track of the changing or emerging demands of consumers and to adopt improvements”. “SMM is not about a mass advertising strategy. It can be used to identify peer groups and advertise to that particular group”. Through social media can be found influencers who can guide a prospective consumer into making a specific purchase. Third, “social media marketing calls for novel advertising methods as the attention span of online junta is very low”. This occurs due to the multitasking phenomena. As a person is watching a video clip on YouTube he/she can be simultaneously updating a blog, while reading another one and watching photographs of friends on Facebook. In order to gain his/her attention away from distractions, the advertisement should be innovative and interesting so to hold the imagination and attention of the consumer. Fourth, “at the same time the message must also provoke the recipient into action; like seeking a detailed description of the product/service, or suggesting to a friend, or initiating purchase”. So, if the advertisement target on direct selling, then it should be included links so that the consumer can buy the product with least effort. Fifth, “social media can be used to increase customer loyalty

through customer support services and hence improve customer retention". Finally, "social media marketing can also be used by brands to ward off any negative publicity".

3. The necessity of applying social media marketing by hotels

It is extremely important for hotels to apply social media marketing in their marketing strategy in order to embrace the great opportunities resulting by social media.

As Mahgold & Faulds (2009) believe "the internet has become a mass media vehicle for consumer-sponsored communications". Consumers are not interested in the traditional sources of advertising any more, like radio, television, magazines, and newspapers because they demand more control over their media consumption. They require on-demand and immediate access to information at their own willingness (Rashtchy et al., 2007; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Moreover, they are turning more frequently to social media to search the information they are interested in and to make their purchasing decisions (Lempert, 2006; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008) as they perceive them more trustworthy than corporate-sponsored communications transmitted via the traditional elements of the promotion mix (Foux, 2006).

In fact, as Papasolomou & Melanthiou (2012, p 325) point out a study carried out by Cone Inc. in 2008 "93% of social media users believe that companies they buy from should have a presence in social media. In addition, 85% share the view that a company should interact with its customers via social media. Also, 56% feel a stronger connection and more satisfaction with the service received by a company when they interact in a social media environment".

Particularly in hospitality industry it has been mentioned that positive online reviews increase the reservation rate in hotels (Ye et al., 2009), namely improve hotel revenues, as a 1-point increase in a 5-point review score generates 11.2% of a hotel's room rate premium. Furthermore, social media plays a significantly important role in affecting hotel guests' satisfaction and service process enhancement and social media can influence guests' purchase behavior and hotel performance (Anderson, 2012).

The importance of the use of social media in hospitality industry is demonstrated by Harmer (2010) in tow examples of two international hotel groups. "Starwood Hotels expressly included social media in its \$6 billion strategic plan for revitalizing the Sheraton brand. In November 2009, Sheraton introduced a new website that connects with Facebook, allowing visitors to post their Sheraton stories simultaneously on both platforms (Sheraton Hotels & Resorts 2009). Likewise, in February 2010, Marriott Hotels invited celebrities to share their *Marriott experience* with their Twitter followers after the company completed a renovation of thirty-eight U.K. properties".

4. The role of marketing strategists in social media marketing

Marketing strategists should become the brand ambassadors with a deep understanding of their brand's value proposition. Social media gives them the chance to create a strong bond

between the company and its customers through an honest and genuine dialogue. This promotes marketing public relations (MPR) into another level—one that has the potential to create stronger bonds with customers, create more positive customer attitudes, and enhance the reputation of the firm (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012).

More specifically, “marketers must learn to talk with their customers rather than talking at them which has been the case with traditional media” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Although it is impossible for them to control all these conversations which been held in social media about their companies, Mangold & Faulds (2009) suggest that they can use methods to “influence and shape these discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organization’s mission and performance goals”. However, as Russell (2012, p 6) thinks “the main focus in social media marketing is to keep consumers informed and not to fool them”.

In conclusion, Berthon et al. (2012, pp264-265) mention five axioms which marketers should keep in mind in order to make effective use of social media and constructively engage creative consumers.

“These axioms relate to how social media and creative consumers arise, how the information that is distributed over social media has both local and general components, and how the technological infrastructure that enables social media is historically contingent.

1. Social media is a function of the technology, culture, and government of a particular country.
2. In the age of social media, local events seldom remain local.
3. In the age of social media, general issues seldom remain general; that is, macro issues tend to be (re)interpreted locally.
4. The actions and creations of creative consumers tend to be a function of the technology, culture, and government of a particular country.
5. Technology tends to be historically dependent; that is, technologies in different countries evolve along unique trajectories due to inertia rather than because they are the optimal solution”.

D. Facebook

1. Historical background

There are numerous social media. However, Facebook is considered the leader of social media. Even it is not the first social media which has been created, it is the most popular and the first one that connected the whole world in one social media platform.

Facebook was created by Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. For two years only students of some American universities, colleges and high schools could use it. However, in 2006 Facebook became accessible to everyone and signaled a new age in people’s communication.

Impressively, in two years only, in January 2009, Facebook registered more than 175 million active users. To put that number in perspective, this is only slightly less than the population of Brazil (190 million) and over twice the population of Germany (80 million) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In just six months, in July 2009, as Treadaway & Smith (2010) characteristically say “Facebook emerged as a leading social networking site with 350 million active users” and became the most popular social media worldwide. In 2010 it reached 500 million active users (Facebook, 2010) and McCarthy et al (2010, p 6) explain that this year “was the year of social media, and *Time* announced Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg as the person of the year”.



Figure 2, Mark Zuckerberg

Source: Time, online

Kwok and Yu (2013, pp85-86) exhibit the amazing numbers of Facebook.

“Facebook became the most visited website (Dev, Buschman, and Bowen 2010) and was the website where Americans spend the most time (Nelson 2010), recording 42.6 billion minutes of user time in October 2010 (Peers 2010). According to one study, Facebook recorded 500 million users in August 2010, of whom 50 percent logged into the website every day; people on average spent 46 minutes per day on Facebook (Zhu and Wilbur 2011). By the time Facebook filed for its initial public

offering in February 2012, the number of Facebook users had jumped to 845 million worldwide (Raice 2012). A recent survey by the Society for Human Resource Management revealed that Facebook had become corporations' most popular website for external communications, cited by 45 percent of respondents (Leonard 2012)."

The year 2013 was a remarkable year for Facebook because the number of active Facebook users had surpassed 1 billion, making it the first social network ever to do so. Today, there are over 2.13 billion monthly active Facebook users (Zephoria, online).

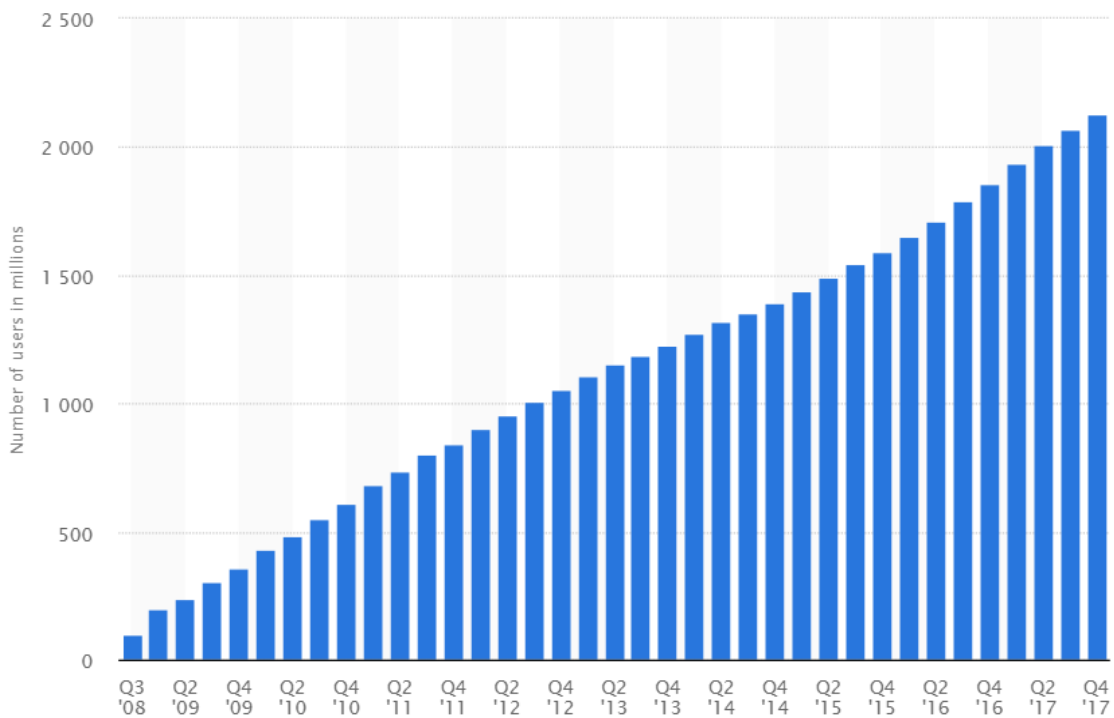


Diagram 1, Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 4th quarter 2017 (in millions)

Source: Statista, online

2.The leader of social media

Treadaway and Smith (2010) give an explanation for the leading position of Facebook. It is a result of its diverse applications and its innovative adoption of social media. Holzer (2009) suggests that “hotels can utilize Facebook by selecting appropriate functions or combining all functions. Facebook has features that enable eMarketing”. Hotels should take advantage of Facebook while it is nearing or at its peak. The opportunities include: (1) viral marketing, (2) business development or generation of lead, (3) outbound communication, (4) complaint management, (5) positive feedback publication, (6) fan club connection, and (7) recommendation testimonials (Treadaway and Smith, 2010).

3.The Facebook as part of marketing strategy of hotels

Using Facebook as part of marketing strategy, hotels can increase their sales.

As it has been mentioned above, through Facebook, hotels become *real* to potential customers (Netti, 2011). They can exhibit to them their offered hospitality product through the description of their hotels, the photos and the videos which they upload in their Facebook profile. Additionally, through the comments in their Facebook profile, they can communicate directly with their potential and current customers. In this way, hotels can enhance their customer loyalty and improve their customer retention (Netti, 2011).

However, the most important action, which hotels should do, is to post texts and even better photos and videos in order to stimulate customers to interact by making "Like", writing comments and sharing the information. So, this interaction can increase the brand awareness, it can boost the brand recognition and finally, it can build the brand loyalty (Gunelius, 2011) which, in turn, can increase the sales revenue.

Moreover, they should enhance customers to write reviews and grade the hotel because these consist the feedback for hotels. In this way, hotels can be always informed about customers' demands and can constantly improve and innovate their offered product. So, the more they satisfy customers' demands, the more positive reviews they receive and so sales can be increased.

In conclusion, through Facebook, hotels can achieve the goal of marketing which is to attract new customers but also to keep in touch with current customers (Russell,2012) and so to increase their sales.



Figure 3, Mission statement of Facebook

Source: Facebook, online

Methodology

The study focused on how the 5-star hotels in Oia Santorini used Facebook as part of their marketing strategy in order to increase sales. It was a qualitative approach and the data collection method is observed using an adjusted set of criteria or factors to support the collection of data on patterns of Facebook used by hotels in Oia Santorini.

The 5-star-hotels in Oia were found through Booking.com. They were these hotels that Booking.com categorized them as 5-star-hotels and they had 10 and more rooms in order to be considered as hotels. These hotels are Andronis Boutique Hotel, Canaves Oia Hotel, Fileria Suites, Katikies Hotel, Kirini Hotel, Mystique Hotel, Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa and Perivolos Hotel.

The number of rooms, which every hotel had, were found by calling each hotel and asking them.

	Hotel	Number of rooms
1	Andronis Boutique Hotel	22
2	Canaves Oia Hotel	18
3	Fileria Suites	10
4	Katikies Hotel	34
5	Kirini Santorini	26
6	Mystique Hotel	40
7	Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa	44
8	Perivolos Hotel	21

Table 1, The number of rooms of each hotel

The adjusted observation criteria were the presence in Facebook, features and volume of content, aesthetic and visual quality, network scope, interaction quality and language use (Hsu, 2012 p. 974). They are analyzed in Table 2.

	Criteria	Description
1	Presence in Facebook	The existence of a Facebook profile of the hotel.
2	Features and volume of content	The mention of important information about the hotel. This information were tabs, the description of the hotel, a statement, the offered product, the access to the hotel,

		contact information, links to other SM, photos, videos, reviews, posts, reviews, likes and comments/shares on posts and events.
3	Aesthetics and visual quality	The design of the profile and the use of brand image as photo profile.
4	Network scope	The number of fans.
5	Interaction quality	"The possibility for posts to stimulate responses that translate into comments (Burgin, 2007 cited in Hsu, 2012, p. 978) that draw responses from more people to spread the message virally (Wilson, 2005 cited in Hsu, 2012, p.978) and reach international leisure travelers" (Hsu, 2012, p. 978).
6	Language use	The language in which the content is written.

Table 2, The observation criteria

The data was collected on 14.03.2018 and were referred to the period from 01.04.2017 until 14.03.2018.

		Andronis Boutique Hotel	Canaves Oia Hotel	Fileria Suites	Katikies Hotel	Kirini Hotel	Mystique Hotel	Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa	Perivolos Hotel
1	Facebook profile	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
1.1	Year of start	2012	2010	2017	2012	2013	2011	2015	2012
2	Features & volume of content	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.1	Tabs	7	8	6	8	8	7	8	6
2.1.1	Home page	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

2.1.2	Information	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.1.3	Review	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.1.4	Photos	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.1.5	Videos	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2.1.6	Posts	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.1.7	Community	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.1.8	Notes	no	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
2.1.9	Events	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no
2.2	About	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.2.1	Description of hotel	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no
2.2.2	Statement	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
2.2.3	Offered product	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.4	Access	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.2.4.1	Location	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.4.2	Directions for public transportation	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	no
2.2.4.3	Parking information	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
2.2.5	Contact information	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.2.5.1	Telephone number	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.5.2	E-mail	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.5.3	Website link	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.6	Links to other SM	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.6.1	Instagram	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.6.2	Tripadvisor	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.2.6.3	Tweeter	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes
2.2.8.4	Pinterest	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes
2.2.6.5	Youtube	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no
2.3	Photos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

2.3.1	Hotel	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.3.2	Facilities	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.3.3	Location	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
2.4	Videos	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2.4.1	Hotel	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2.4.2	Facilities	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2.4.3	View	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
2.5	Reviews	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.5.1	Rating out of 5	4.9	4.7	0	5	4.9	4.8	4.9	5
2.5.2	Total amount of reviews	206	570	0	155	95	117	160	194
2.6	Outbound communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.6.1	Kind of written posts	promotional	promotional	promotional	promotional	promotional	promotional	promotional	promotional
2.6.2	Photos per month	10	25	3	8	8	25	20	4
2.7	Inbound communication	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.7.1	"Likes" per month	80	260	1	170	130	130	176	123
2.7.2	Comments and shares	very few in very few posts	very few in very few posts	none	a lot	very few in very few posts	very few in very few posts	very few in very few posts	few in every post
2.8	Events	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no
3	Aesthetics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.1	Design	basic	basic	basic	basic	basic	basic	basic	basic
3.2	Brand as photo profile	yes	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes
4	Number of fans	5.310	56.034	34	22.445	10.158	37.416	27.470	11.121
5	Interaction quality	none	none	none	they answered thankfullly on comments	none	none	none	none

6	Language use	english	english	english	english	english	english	english	english
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Table 3, The collected data

Results

A. Background of the hotels

All the eight hotels catered to national but mainly to international leisure travellers. There were differences in the size of the eight hotels in terms of the number of rooms as shown in Table 3. The largest was Santo Maris Luxury Suites and Spa with 44 rooms, whereas Fileria Suites was the smallest with just 10 rooms. All the eight hotels used to operate seasonally starting from April until the end of October. The occupancy rate of all hotels was almost 100% in the whole season. This happened because firstly the hotels had small size, so they could be managed easily and secondly, they were located in a worldwide popular island which attracts millions of travellers every year. Beyond that, especially Oia constitutes the most famous, luxury and expensive place in Santorini as also the most picturesque and most photographed place. It is famous for its sunset and the most characteristic photos of the island Santorini have been taken from Oia.

B. Pattern of Facebook used by the hotels

Facebook is an online platform which is used by hotels for marketing purposes. Through Facebook hotels can communicate various information to everyone who is interested. The categories of information are summarized in Table 3. Apart from fotos, web site links and location, the hotels use the same functions of Facebook.

C. Data analysis

1. Facebook presence

All the eight hotels had presence on Facebook, namely they had a Facebook profile. They could be searched in english language as their brand names were written in latin letters. This shows the interest which these hotels had to international travellers.

The years which the hotels created Facebook profile vary. The hotel which was presented first on Facebook was Canaves Oia Hotel which created its profile on 2010. Mystique Hotel followed one year later on 2011 and it was the second one. On 2012 three hotels created their Facebook profiles Andronis Boutique Hotel, Katikies Hotel and Perivolos Hotel. Then followed Kirini Hotel which was presented on Facebook on 2013. Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa created its Facebook profile on 2015. However, it should be mentioned that Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa was a new hotel that time which started its operation on 2016. The younger Facebook profile belonged to Fileria Suites which was created on 2017. This happened because Fileria was also a new hotel that time which had been operating just one year since 2017.

2.Features and volume of content

Features and volume content contain the main information and activities on the Facebook profile of hotels. Description of the hotel, posts, photos and reviews are some of the features of a Facebook profile. All the hotels had much the same features and volume of content, except for Fileria Suites which was inferior to some features as videos and links to other social media, as also to volume of content such as reviews, outbound and inbound communication because it had just one year of operation.

2.1 Tabs

Tabs are the groups in which the content is categorized. For an easy use of the profile, it should not include more than ten tabs.

All the eight hotels had between 6-9 tabs, as they are presented in Table 3. All of them had tabs regarding home page, information, reviews, photos, posts and community. Six of them had a tab regarding videos, four of them had a tab regarding events and only one, Canaves Oia Hotel, had a tab regarding notes.

2.2 About

This category includes all the contact information and the description of the hotel. Analytically, in this category are included the description of the hotel, the statement, the offered product, the location, parking information, directions in case of using public transportation, the contact telephone number, the e-mail address, the website link and links to other social media.

2.2.1 Description of the hotel

The description of the hotel is very important because with this information the hotel is introduced to the users. However, only five hotels had a description, Andronis Boutique Hotel, Mystique Hotel and Perivolos Hotel did not include any description in their information sector.

2.2.2 Statement

Writing a statement on Facebook profile attracts customers with sensationalism. For example, "Where the most desire expectations are exceeded" by Andronis Boutique Hotel, as also "A legendary hotel in a unique location" by Katikies hotel and "Luxury that evokes all your senses" by Kirini Hotel.

Except from Fileria Suites and Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa, all the other six hotels included a statement in their profile.

2.2.3 Offered product

Directly or indirectly in the Facebook profiles of the hotels was mentioned the product which was offered. Directly was mentioned in the description as also and in the statement. Indirectly could be meant through the posts, the photos, the videos and the reviews. All the eight hotels mentioned in a similar way the product which they offered which was exactly the same, a 5-star leisure accommodation with luxury facilities and outstanding view.

2.2.4 Access

Information regarding the access to the hotel was given through pointing of the location of the hotel on the map, as in Santorini there are no addresses, as also and through directions in case of using public transportation. An extra useful information was the existence of parking place for those travellers who wanted to get a vehicle.

All the eight hotels included a map mentioning their place. However, only four of them Canaves Oia Hotel, Katikies Hotel and Mystique Hotel had directions for accessing the hotel in case of using public transportation. Whereas, parking information was referred on six hotels' profiles, except from Fileria Suites and Mystique Hotel.

2.2.5 Contact information

Contact information, which are telephone number, e-mail address and website link, is very important to be included in the information sector in order users be able to come directly in contact with the hotel and to be able to make a booking with the least effort.

All the eight hotels included all this contact information in their profiles.

2.2.6 Links to other social media

The existence of links to other social media platforms is very important as many social media users have accounts to more than one social media platform. In this way users can interact with the hotel through other social media platforms and this helps the hotel to make known its brand name in more potential customers.

It is remarkable that seven hotels had links to Instagram and six hotels to Tripadvisor. This is a sign that these two social media platforms are very popular and influence a great portion of social media users.

Two hotels had also links to Twitter and Pinterest. Whereas, only one hotel had link to YouTube.

On the contrary, Fileria Suites did not have any link to any other social media platform.



















Mystique Hotel	    
Perivolos Hotel	   
Andronis Boutique Hotel	 
Katikies Hotel	 
Kirini Hotel	 
Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa	 
Canaves Oia Hotel	
Fileria Suites	None



Table 4, Links to other social media platforms per hotel

2.3 Photos

Photos are the most important feature in Facebook. It could be assumed that social media are so popular because of photos. Posting just a photo someone can describe a situation, express a feeling even inform the users for something. Obviously, a photo or an image is more attractive than a text. Additionally, the strength of a photo can be multiplied in Facebook through the sharing between the users.

All the eight hotels had posts with photos on their Facebook profiles. In fact, the most posts were photos. Through the photos the hotels tried to describe to users how the hotel looked like. The photos were about the property of the hotel, namely the rooms and the indoor and outdoor public places, the facilities of the hotel, for example the restaurant, the bar, the swimming pool, the spa and last but not least the view of the hotel. Because of their location on a such unique place with a such outstanding view, most photos showed the view which they had.



Katikies Hotel Santorini



24 Σεπτεμβρίου 2017 · Instagram · 🌐

Just a small hint of our new signature cocktail for Katikies Mykonos. Cheers!



•Opening in 2018 ➡️ SOON

.

👉 Follow us @katikiesmykonos

.... Δείτε περισσότερα

Δείτε τη μετάφραση



👍 Μου αρέσει!

💬 Σχολιάστε

➦ Κοινοποιήστε

Figure 4, A post of Katikies Hotel

Source: Facebook profile of Katikies Hotel, online



Ο χρήστης **Canaves Oia, Luxury Resorts and Villas, Santorini** ***
κοινοποίησε τη δημοσίευση του χρήστη World Luxury Restaurant
Awards — 😊 περήφανος στην τοποθεσία 📍 Canaves Oia,
Luxury Resorts and Villas, Santorini.

9 Μαρτίου · Οία · 🌐

We're proud to be an official participant of the 2018 World Luxury Restaurant Awards

Δείτε τη μετάφραση



Figure5, A post of Canaves Oia Hotel

Source: Facebook profile of Canaves Oia Hotel, online

2.4 Videos

The second important feature in Facebook is videos. It comes second because it demands time for someone to watch a video, so no everyone spends time to watch every video in Facebook, while a photo needs just a look. However, a video is the most representative mean in order to show something, because it conveys the reality better than a photo.

Nevertheless, two hotels, Fileria Suites and Perivolas Hotel, did not post any video. All the other hotels posted videos. The videos were about the property of the hotel, the view and the facilities of the hotel. Except from Andronis Boutique Hotel whose videos showed only the property and the view.

2.5 Reviews

All the hotels had reviews in their profile, except for Fileria Suites. All of them had very high scores (Table 3). The total number of reviews vary accordingly the hotel. Canaves Oia Hotel had the higher number of reviews, 570 reviews. Then Andronis Boutique Hotel and Perivolos Hotel had approximately 200 reviews. The other hotels had between 160-95 reviews. Except for Fileria Suites which had not any review.

It is a fact that the number of reviews was not related with the number of fans who the Facebook profiles of the hotels had (Table 3), but it is related with the kind of customer service which each hotel applied. The more personal customer service the hotel applied, the more reviews received.

2.6 Outbound communication

Outbound communication is considered the actions that the hotel does in its profile. These are the posts which it writes and the photos or videos which it uploads (Hsu, 2012, p. 977)

All the posts that the all eight hotels did, had promotional aim. They were referred to the offered product of the hotel trying to attract potential customers.

As it was mentioned above, posting a photo is the most important action in Facebook. This action was followed by the all eight hotels having all of them uploaded photos on their Facebook profile. However, the frequency of posting photos per month diverse. Canaves Oia Hotel, Mystique Hotel and Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa had the most frequent posts of photos, 20-25 uploaded photos per month. Andronis Boutique Hotel, Katikies Hotel and Kirini Hotel were less frequent with 8-10 uploaded photos per month. Whereas, Fileria Suites and Perivolos Hotel posted only 3-4 photos per month.

2.7 Inbound communication

Inbound communication is considered the actions that the users do regarding the content of the profile. These are the reactions on posts, such as "Likes", the comments which users write on posts and the sharing of posts between the users (Hsu, 2012, p 977)

Canaves Oia Hotel concentrated the most "Likes" per month, with 260 "Likes". Second were Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa and Katikies Hotel with 176 and 170 "Likes" per month respectively. Third were Kirini Hotel with 130 "Likes", Mystique Hotel with 130 "Likes" and Perivolos Hotel with 123 "Likes". Fourth was Andronis Boutique Hotel with 80 "Likes". And last was Fileria Suites with just 1 "Like".

It was observed that the numbers of "Likes" was almost accordingly the number of fans who the profiles had. The more fans, the more "Likes" the posts had (Table 3).

Regarding the comments on posts and shares of posts, except for on the one hand Katikies Hotel which had a lot of comments and shares and in the other hand Fileria Suites which had none, the other hotels had very few comments and shares on very few posts.

2.8 Events

The half number of the hotels had events as a feature of their content, whereas the other did not have. These events were not only events which were organized from the hotel and took place in the hotel, but also and various of events which were happened in the island apart from the hotels.




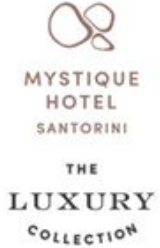
3. Aesthetic and visual quality

The aesthetic of the profile refers to the design of it and the photo profile which is used. Based Forbes magazine (online) a professional Facebook profile should have an image of its brand name for photo profile, "because the more people see it, the more they'll recognize it and associate it with the brand".

The design of the profiles of the all eight hotels was the same. The design was the basic design which the platform of Facebook offered.

However, not all the eight hotels had photo profile an image of their brand name. Katikies Hotel and Kirini Hotel had both photo profile photos which illustrated the view from the hotels.

<p>Andronis Boutique Hotel</p>	
<p>Canaves Oia Hotel</p>	

<p>Fileria Suites</p>	
<p>Katikies Hotel</p>	 <p>(It is not an image of the brand name)</p>
<p>Kirini Hotel</p>	 <p>(It is not an image of the brand name)</p>
<p>Mystique Hotel</p>	


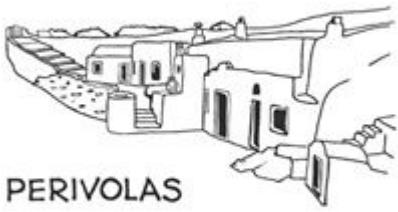
<p>Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa</p>	
<p>Perivolos Hotel</p>	

Table 5, Photos profile of each hotel

4. Network scope

The aim of each professional Facebook profile is to have as many fans as it can. So, through the interaction of Facebook the hotel can be promoted and can attract more potential customers.

Canaves Oia Hotel had the most fans, 56,034 fans. Mystique Hotel had 37,416 fans. Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa had 27,470 fans. Katikies Hotel had 22,445 fans. Perivolos Hotel had 11,121 fans. Kirini Hotel had 10,158 fans. Andronis Boutique Hotel had 5,310 fans. And last Fileria Suites had just 34 fans.

5. Interaction quality

As Burgin mentioned "apart from interesting topics, the posts should stimulate responses that translate into comments" (Hsu, 2012, p 978). So, it would be a great opportunity for hotels to increase the activity of their Facebook profiles by responding to comments.

Nevertheless, only Katikies Hotel responded on comments. The other hotels did never respond to any comment.



Figure 6, A comment of Katikies Hotel profile

Source: Facebook profile of Katikies Hotel, online

6. Language use

All the eight hotels used English language as the main language of their profiles. Obviously, this happened because the hotels are interested in international travellers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

It seems that the eight hotels of Oia realised the importance and the power of social media marketing and all of them used Facebook as part of their marketing strategy. They all used it successfully. The only exception was that of Fileria Suites. As it has been mentioned, Fileria Suites was a new hotel, which had operated just for one season and had made its Facebook profile just in 2017. So, its performance in Facebook was inferior compared to the other hotels.

All the eight Facebook profiles had all the main information which should include. Such as offered product, location, contact details and photos. Especially, posting photos is the main use of social media. The most active hotels in posting photos were Canaves Oia Hotel, Mystique Hotel and Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa. Then followed Andronis Boutique Hotel, Katikies Hotel and Kirini Hotel. Last were Perivolos Hotel and Fileria Suites. The greater number of photos illustrated the view of the hotels. This proved that the strong point of hotels in Oia was the amazing view to Caldera and sunset. So, their view constituted the competitive advantage in their social media marketing strategy.

Another significant element was the number of fans who every Facebook profile had. All hotels had thousand of fans except for Fileria Suites with just 34 fans. On the other hand, Canaves Oia had the bigger number of fans with a great difference than the other hotels. Then followed in a row Mystique Hotel, Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa, Katikies Hotel, Perivolos Hotel, Kirini Hotel, Andronis Boutique Hotel and last Fileria Suites. So, having the possibility thousands of people viewing every post on the Facebook profile, the brand loyalty of the hotels could be enhanced with each post.

Despite of the thousands of fans, the “Likes” on the posts were not enough. A monthly average of 150 “Likes” is not considered a satisfied number. It could be easily assumed that posting almost always the same kind of photo, illustrated the view of the hotel, did not motivate the fans to “Like” the photo because they had already liked a similar photo in a previous post. Also, they may get bored viewing similar photos. So, the hotels need to have a variety of posting photos illustrated not only the view but also the rest of their offered product, such as the spaces of the hotel, the facilities, the amenities even and abstract photos which represent the philosophy and the atmosphere of the hotel.

However, all hotels had excellent scores to reviews, except for Fileria Suites which had any review yet. Their ratings fluctuated between 4.7 and 5 out of 5. Also, in combination with the high numbers of reviews it could be claimed that the users who were guests of the hotels were totally satisfied.

Except for Facebook, the eight hotels of Oia expanded the social media marketing to other social media which linked them with their Facebook profile. The most popular was Instagram with seven out of eight hotels having a linked profile. Then followed Tripadvisor with six of these hotels to connect it with their Facebook profile and few of them used also Twitter, Pinterest and Youtube. The use of other social media showed that the hotels

realized quickly the power of the upcoming social media marketing and constituted it already as a main part of their marketing strategy.

Analyzing every hotel, they could be categorized based their popularity and activity. The first criterion was considered the number of fans. Second the number of posting photos per month. Third the number of “Likes” per month and forth the number of reviews per month. So, the most active hotel was Canaves Oia Hotel, then followed Mystique Hotel, next was Santo Maris Oia Luxury Suites and Spa, then followed Katikies Hotel and with a significant distance from the previous hotels followed Perivolas Hotel, Kirini Hotel and last Fileria Suites. The last three hotels should improve their Facebook profile by having more fans and posting more often. Especially Fileria Suites should invest a lot of effort in order to obtain a competitive Facebook profile.

In conclusion, with a completed and active Facebook profile as also and high scores in reviews, the eight hotels of Oia were able to strengthen their brand loyalty, attract customers and in this way to boost their bookings and so to increase sales.

B.Recommendations for future research

Facebook offers a variety of means for the hotels in Oia to apply marketing strategy. Nevertheless, the hotels should always try to improve their presence in Facebook by perfecting their Facebook profiles.

For achieving this, it is recommended for all the eight hotels, firstly to use an image of their brand name as photo profile. Secondly, to respond on comments and reviews, which customers write, in order to interact with them. And thirdly, to post a variety of photos and videos not showing mostly the view, but also the property of the hotel and the facilities, because customers are not exclusively interested in the view, but also to their accommodation.

In the final analysis, Facebook and general the social media has such many capabilities that it worthy can be considered a main part of marketing strategy of hotels.

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Appendix

Figure 2

Time:

http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2036683_2037183_2037185,00.html

Diagram 1

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>

Figure 3

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

Figure 4

<https://www.facebook.com/Katikies/>

Figure 5

<https://www.facebook.com/canavesoia/>

Figure 6

<https://www.facebook.com/Katikies/>