

THESIS

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Case Study: “Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Hotel in Morocco”

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1. Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly digital, with nearly half of the population now connected. Since so many people use the internet, it's common for companies to consider going digital as well.

Due to increasing popularity of internet applications, many tourism organizations such as hotels, airline companies and travel agencies have started using internet as one of their important marketing and communications strategies. In this way, internet has been one of the strongest elements of competition in tourism sector. Social media has started being used as a new marketing approach within the growing internet technologies by tourism sector (Sengün, 2015).

Tourism businesses can succeed with the help of a strong destination marketing organization. In promotion of destinations, the role of social media increases day by day. Today more travellers use online resources to learn about travel destinations, service providers, and pricing options to inform and make their purchases. Effective use of social media is probably the best tool for destinations for raising awareness about the destination. It is cheap and effective, but it requires time, planning, good strategy and innovation (Boz, 2011).

Social media is boosting tourism sector businesses in engaging potential visitors, increasing their online presence, and resulting in increased online sales. Youcheng Wang and Daniel R. Fesenmaier (2004) demonstrated in their journal "Modelling participation in an online travel community" how social media may be exploited to manage customer relations because of their unique ability to attract customers via in, targeted, and member-generated material, engage customers through social interactions, and retain customers via relationship development with other members.

Social media offers tourist businesses unique chances to learn and respond to consumer preferences. Hotels and other travel-related businesses may better understand what their visitors like and hate about them and their rivals by examining reviews on online forums such as TripAdvisor and Virtual tourist (Dellarocas, 2003).

However, the tourism sector is also concerned in this concept, the study will explore the research problem: "does online/social media marketing have an impact on the reputation of Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea and Spa?" To see the possibilities and looking into whether their social media marketing has an influence on their brand image.

To better approach this topic, my current research will be based on a real case study a hotel known as “Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & spa” in Morocco.

My present research will be based on the Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa, which is one of Morocco's most magnificent and well-known hotels, located in the famous tourist destination of Agadir. The purpose of this study is to assess the impact of social media marketing on the brand image of the hotel. In order to accomplish that, I aimed to conduct an online questionnaire to get feedback on the hotel's social media presence and if it influences people's perceptions of the hotel's reputation. This assisted me in determining if the hotel's approach was appropriate and efficient as well as identifying areas for improvement or change recommendations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Marketing in the tourism industry

Marketing has been defined as the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual (customer) and organizational objectives (Kotler P. , 1984).

In general, tourism marketing is part of marketing and follows the same principles of marketing. However, what distinguishes tourism marketing is that it is similar to service marketing. In many aspects, tourism marketing and service marketing are similar in that both include promoting and selling intangible objects, such as experiences and services, rather than physical commodities. Nevertheless, there are a few significant distinctions between the two (Othman, 2019).

Tourism marketing concentrates on promoting potential tourists' destinations, tourist spots, and journeys. This sort of marketing often highlights a destination's or attraction's unique traits and experiences in order to persuade people to visit the location. Service marketing, on the other hand, is concerned with the promotion and sale of services in a diverse range of industries, such as hospitality, healthcare, and financial sectors. Service marketing include advertising the service's benefits and distinguishing qualities, as well as building client loyalty and connections (Kotler P. B., 2014).

Tourism companies try to combine different marketing techniques and realize the importance of sending the right messages through the proper media channels (Živković, 2014).

Tourism and hospitality, like other service sectors, contain both tangible and intangible items, physical features, such as hotel rooms and restaurants, as well as equipment and transportation employed in the delivery of services, are examples of tangible features in tourism and hospitality. Intangible elements, in contrast side, include customers' travel and hospitality experiences, sensations, and thoughts. This might include the amount of comfort and luxury they receive, the personal attention they get, and the memories they make while on vacation or employing hospitality services. Tourism and hospitality businesses must comprehend and control both the tangible and intangible components of their products and services, since both may have a significant influence on consumer satisfaction and loyalty (Hall, 2016).

The tourism marketing mix is a set of marketing activities, which work with consistency and complement each other (Othman, 2019).

The seven components of the tourism marketing mix are product, pricing, promotion, place or distribution, people, process, and physical evidence. In tourism, the primary role of the marketing mix is to make tourists conscious of what the business is aiming to sell or promote.

- **Product**

Tourism product in marketing is referred to as any product or service related to tourism like transportation, accommodation, restaurants, attractions, shops, landscapes and etc. Sometimes in tourism, products are free of cost as compared to other fields as natural beauty of one's country (Kaur S. , 2014).

- **Pricing**

Pricing is one of the most effective and important elements of the marketing mix, as it is the only variable that generates income. Hotel pricing is not controlled, but based on offered services. But this is the owner's choice. Pricing directly contributes to tourists ' decision whether or not to use the hotels (Othman, 2019).

- **Promotion**

In tourism, promotion includes all of the techniques through which the business promotes and sells itself such as advertising, public relations, and sales promotions. Tourism promotion provides the tourist with information about the tourist organization and the program they offer as well as the proper scientific promotion to encourage tourists to contract one of the tourism programs provided by the organization. Promotion is vital to successful marketing of a tourism product (Othman, 2019).

- **Placement / distribution**

This is considered one of the most important decisions made by the tourism marketing department in the tourist establishments which ultimately affect its success or failure in the tourist flows to the tourist destination area (Kotler P. &, 2007).

Distribution channels are used to make tourism products available and accessible to prospective tourists, consideration must be given to how the product can be made easily accessible to customers. (Othman, 2019).

- **People**

The people involved in delivering and promoting the product, including employees, tour guides, and customer service representatives.

In tourism people represent the culture of the country by creating specific touch on the minds of tourists. The way they speak and handle the customers are the driven forces of tourism. They must have to possess relevant knowledge and training regarding the product and the services which they are selling to their customers (Kaur S. , 2014).

- **Process**

In tourism process is the mean of conveying messages, services and information to customers in an easy manner so that customers can easily access those particular products. The processes involved in delivering the product, including booking and payment procedures, customer service processes, and product delivery processes (Kaur S. , 2014).

- **Physical evidence**

The tangible elements of the product, including brochures, websites, and signage, that provide customers with evidence of the quality and value of the product such as beds, Wi-Fi connections, meals, buildings, interior of any service. It is the environment which matches with the perceptions of customer regarding that product/destination (Kaur S. , 2014)

2.2. Social media marketing as an important tool for tourism

Social media marketing is a new and fast expanding trend that allows businesses to effectively reach out to targeted customers. Social media plays an increasingly important role in many aspects of tourism, exclusively while searching information, making the decision and promoting tourism, focusing on the best applications to engage with customers through the platforms of social media, and for the last twenty years, the researchers have acknowledged that social media has made it essential for tourists to decide and plan their trip (Islam, 2021).

2.2.1. The importance of social media in tourism

Social media marketing is the most recent and widespread market trend. Traditional marketing techniques such like television, magazines, and journals are incredibly expensive and only reach a tiny amount of people. Traditional marketing approaches were built on concentrating on certain markets independently. The sales growth and suggestions to other users demonstrate that social media is a significant method for examining visitor perceptions. Social media refers the activities of different customers in the society, gathering and sharing online information and knowledge. Marketers know that theoretically, social media should be

a powerful way to generate sustainable, positive word-of-mouth marketing. It is very important that marketers select the right social media platform, design the right message and engage the right users to spread that message for implementing successful campaign (Jashi, 2013).

Social media helps destinations, travel agencies, hotels, and other tourism-related businesses access and interact with their target audience, grow their brand, and boost reservations and profit. Here are a few examples of how social media is significant in tourism:

- Connecting with customers
- Building brand awareness
- Influencing customer behavior
- Generating bookings and revenue
- Providing a cost-effective marketing solution

2.2.2. EWOM and social media

Social media websites have created valuable opportunities for electronic word of mouth (eWOM) conversations. People are now able to discuss products and services of brands with their friends and acquaintances (Erkan, 2016).

In short, social media plays an enormous influence on eWOM by allowing individuals to express their insights and experiences with everyone, affecting purchase decisions, and allowing companies to interact with their users.

The electronic word of Mouth can enhance visitor satisfaction due to product or service improvement. At the same time, eWOM can solve problems and doubts during the travel and it can help discover what tourists think and say about their experience. However, the main benefit can be monitoring of the company's reputation/image or even the analyses of the current competitive strategies (Živković R. , 2014).

EWOM may be both beneficial and harmful, and it spreads rapidly through online groups and social networks. Positive eWOM may assist develop a strong brand and boost bookings and profitability, but bad eWOM can harm a brand's reputation and customer loyalty.

2.2.3. The world's biggest social media platforms

The most important forms of social media platforms are social networks, blogs, opinion platforms, and content sharing platforms. To access these social media platforms, desktop computers, laptops, smartphones and tablets are currently the typical interface technologies, all of these technologies can be utilized to achieve various marketing objectives, including

branding, customer service, product testing, relationship marketing and the like (Rauschnabe, 2016).

Social media user numbers have continued to grow over the past 12 months too, with 137 million new users joining social media since this time last year.

Facebook remains the world's most widely used social media platform, but there are now six social media platforms that each claim one billion or more monthly active users (Dataportal, 2023).

- Facebook has 2.958 billion monthly active users
- YouTube's potential advertising reach is 2.514 billion
- Instagram has 2 billion monthly active users
- TikTok ads can potentially reach 1.051 billion adults over the age of 18 each month
- Snapchat's potential advertising reach is 635 million
- Twitter's potential advertising reach is roughly 556 million
- Pinterest has 445 million monthly active users

2.2.4. the benefits of using social media

New media may help businesses in a variety of ways. To begin with, social media is inexpensive and has a worldwide reach, in comparison to traditional promoting Print advertisements in magazines, Radio and television commercials, Brochures and flyers distributed through tourist information canters and hotels. To further comprehend the benefits of social media marketing, consider the following (Nadaraja, 2013):

Cost-related

The main advantage of social media marketing is cost-related. The financial barriers to social media marketing are quite low compared to others. The majority of social media sites are free to access, create profile and post information. Whereas traditional marketing campaigns can cost millions of dollars, many social media tools are free even for business use. Businesses can run highly successful social media marketing campaigns on a limited budget. The advantage of reaching your targeted market for little or no cash investment is substantial, and the audience wanting your information voluntarily joins or follows you. Pay-per-click advertisements on sites such as Facebook are "geo-targeted" according to specific criteria, to reach the correct audience (Nadaraja, 2013).

Social interaction

One of the most notable phenomena of new media is how it has increased and created new forms of social interaction. People spend more than a quarter of their time online involved in communication activities (e.g., emails, and social networks), which is equivalent to the total time spent online for general leisure and entertainment. Consumer behavior studies reveal that individuals give greater consideration to advice and information shared online, spending more time with websites that provide third-party evaluations (Nadaraja, 2013).

Interactivity

Interactivity is one of the defining characteristics of new media technologies, giving greater access to information as well as supporting increased user control of and engagement with social media content. While interactivity can be simple in certain contexts (e.g., simply filling out forms, clicking links), it can also be more involved and elaborate, such as allowing individuals to develop online content. This user interactivity enables consumers to participate in personal social networking by selecting the content, timing, and communication act. Specific applications of social media empower consumers, such that they can take active control and perform two-way communications (Nadaraja, 2013).

Targeted market

Social media platforms provide a variety of targeting possibilities, allowing tourist companies to reach out to certain demographics, interests, and behaviors. This is particularly useful in the tourist business, as organizations usually desire to reach certain groups of tourists, such as families, adventure travelers, or luxury travelers (Nadaraja, 2013).

- Demographic targeting: Social media platforms allow organizations to target specific age groups, genders, locations, and other demographic characteristics.
- Interest-based targeting: Organizations may target individuals depending on their preferences, such as travel, gastronomy, or sports.
- Geo-targeting: Businesses may target tourists based on their geographic location via social media platforms.

Customer service

Customers may be served online by having a well-designed website with easy navigation and reservation alternatives, offering online booking systems, keeping an active social media presence, implementing email marketing, offering live chat help, and handling online reviews and comments. This can result in a more convenient and efficient customer experience, increased client loyalty, and increased reach (*Nadaraja, 2013*).

2.3. Tourism in Morocco

2.3.1. In Morocco

Morocco's tourism business is well established, with a huge focus on the country's shore, culture, and history. Morocco is one of North Africa's most stable and peaceful countries, allowing tourism to flourish. In 1985, the Moroccan government established the Ministry of Tourism. Tourism represents 7% of Moroccan economic activity, employing more than half a million people. Morocco is amongst the best-developed tourism markets in Africa, benefitting from its proximity to Europe, a wide variety of landscapes and attractions, year-round warm weather in parts of the country, and a more stable political and security environment than some of its regional competitors. According to the 2019 Travel Risk Map, in terms of travel safety, Morocco is as safe as most European countries, such as the United States, and Canada, and thereby has a low-risk level (Mordor intelligence, 2021).

Agadir and Marrakech are the most popular destinations for hotel stays. Several construction projects are underway to try and increase the number of hotel rooms and the Vision 2020 target is to expand room capacity but also to encourage people to stay for longer by building resorts as well as luxury accommodation.

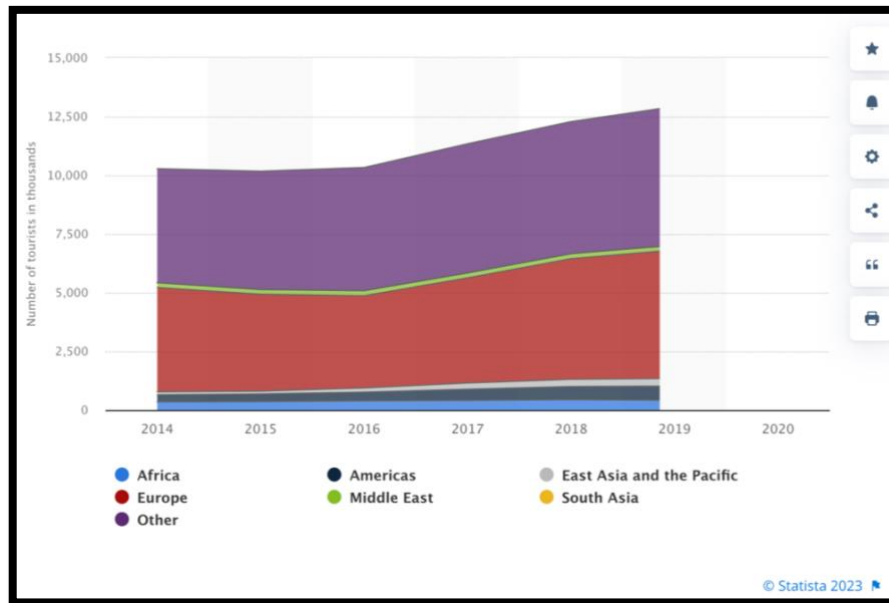


Figure 1: Number of international tourist arrivals in Morocco from 2014 to 2020, by region of origin

Source: Statista 2023

In figure 1 most international tourists who arrived in Morocco in 2020 were from Europe, reaching over one million people. European tourists were significantly higher in number compared to the other regions. The following leading continents of origins were Africa and the Americas, accounting for 102,000 and 99,000 inbound tourists, respectively. Morocco is one of the leading touristic destinations in Africa, together with Egypt, South Africa, and Tunisia (Statista, 2023).

2.3.2. In Agadir

Agadir is a major modern city in the southern part of Morocco. It is of interest primarily because of its location, as it is surrounded by the Anti Atlas, the Sahara Desert on the Atlantic coast with many national parks, and secluded beaches which are all easily accessible (Wikitravel, 2022). As a very popular destination among national and international tourists, Souss Massa has the advantage of combining seaside with rich and diverse inlands; making it one of the best tourist destinations in the world, especially for European tourists. Hotel facilities in Agadir offer nearly 30% of the total national bed capacity (Kingdom of Morocco, 2018). First tourist hub, Souss Massa region is very diverse; it's a land of contrasts offering an infinite number of tracks and ambiance (Ouariti, 2014).

- Mild, sunny climate;
- Broad and heterogeneous area (beaches, sand dunes, flora, fauna)

- Tourist attraction sites;
- More than 100 hotel establishments listed;
- More than 30,000 beds;
- More than 600,000 tourists a year;
- More than 3 million nights (in the hotels) a year

The various forms of tourism in the city:

Seaside tourism is a main pillar of the economy in the Souss-Massa-Draa region given the enormous tourism potential it contains, it is ranked first in seaside hotel capacity in all of Morocco (OUARITI, 2014)

- Sports tourism (water sports, Golf);
- Thalassotherapy;
- Tourism events: festival, conference, forum, exhibitions

2.4. Social media in Morocco

There were 31.59 million internet users in Morocco in January 2022. Morocco's internet penetration rate stood at 84.1 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. Kepios analysis indicates that internet users in Morocco increased by 363 thousand (+1.2 percent) between 2021 and 2022. For perspective, these user figures reveal that 5.96 million people in Morocco did not use the internet at the start of 2022, meaning that 15.9 percent of the population remained offline at the beginning of the year (Kemp, 2022).

There were 23.80 million social media users in Morocco in January 2022. The number of social media users in Morocco at the start of 2022 was equivalent to 63.4 percent of the total population, but it's important to note that social media users may not represent unique individuals. Kepios analysis reveals that social media users in Morocco increased by 1.8 million (+8.2 percent) between 2021 and 2022 (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.1. Facebook

Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicates that Facebook had 18.95 million users in Morocco in early 2022. The company's revised audience figures mean that Facebook's ad reach in Morocco was equivalent to 50.5 percent of the total population at the start of 2022. However, Facebook restricts the use of its platform to people aged 13 and above, so it's also worth highlighting that 65.5 percent of the "eligible" audience in Morocco uses

Facebook in 2022. For additional context, Facebook’s ad reach in Morocco was equivalent to 60.0 percent of the local internet user base (regardless of age) in January 2022 (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.2. YouTube

Updates to Google’s advertising resources indicate that YouTube had 21.40 million users in Morocco in early 2022. This figure means that YouTube’s 2022 ad reach was equivalent to 57.0 percent of Morocco’s total population at the start of the year. To put those figures in perspective, YouTube ads reached 67.7 percent of Morocco’s total internet user base (regardless of age) in January 2022 (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.3. Instagram

Numbers published in Meta’s advertising tools indicate that Instagram had 9.30 million users in Morocco in early 2022. This figure suggests that Instagram’s ad reach in Morocco was equivalent to 24.8 percent of the total population at the start of the year. However, Instagram restricts the use of its platform to people aged 13 and above, so it’s helpful to know that 32.1 percent of the “eligible” audience in Morocco uses Instagram in 2022. It’s also worth noting that Instagram’s ad reach in Morocco at the start of 2022 was equivalent to 29.4 percent of the local internet user base (regardless of age) (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.4. TikTok

Figures published in Byte Dance’s advertising resources indicate that TikTok had 5.97 million users aged 18 and above in Morocco in early 2022. Note that ByteDance allows marketers to target TikTok ads to users aged 13 and above via its advertising tools, but these tools only show audience data for users aged 18 and above. For context, ByteDance’s figures indicate that TikTok ads reached 23.1 percent of all adults aged 18 and above in Morocco at the start of 2022. Meanwhile, TikTok’s ad reach in Morocco was equivalent to 18.9 percent of the local internet user base at the beginning of the year, regardless of age (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.5. Twitter

Numbers published in Twitter’s advertising resources indicate that Twitter had 2.85 million users in Morocco in early 2022.

This figure means that Twitter’s ad reach in Morocco was equivalent to 7.6 percent of the total population at the time. However, Twitter restricts the use of its platform to people aged 13 and above, so it may be helpful to know that 9.8 percent of the “eligible” audience in Morocco uses Twitter in 2022. For additional context, Twitter’s ad reach in Morocco was

equivalent to 9.0 percent of the local internet user base (regardless of age) at the start of the year (Kemp, 2022).

2.4.6. TripAdvisor

TripAdvisor, the world's largest travel platform*, helps 463 million travelers each month make every trip their best trip. Travelers across the globe use the TripAdvisor site and app to browse more than 859 million reviews and opinions of 8.6 million accommodations, restaurants, experiences, airlines and cruises (TripAdvisor, 2019).

Indeed, I could say you that TripAdvisor, as it is in many other countries all over the world, is a popular travel social network site in Morocco too.

2.5. Presentation of the Hotel chain and the actual hotel studied

Sofitel is a subsidiary of Accor, a leading hospitality business with over 5,200 hotels and 10,000 food and beverage outlets spread over 110 countries.

2.5.1. Presentation of the Accor-chain

Accor, the European leader in hotels and tourism and the global leader in services, has 170,000 employees and operates in nearly 110 countries.

2.5.1.1. History

Accor is the story of two friends, Paul Dubrule and Gérard Pélisson, who opened their first Novotel in 1967 at a time when no one in France yet believed in this new hotel business model. Through their creativity and boldness, they pushed the boundaries of what is possible ever further. Today their dream of hospitality has become Accor. A wind of conquest still blows over the Group which brings together over 5,300 addresses in 110 countries. Proud heirs of the co-founders' vision, everyday more than 230,000 talented people continue to invent the hospitality of tomorrow and bring to life their passion for the guest (Accor, 2022).

2.5.1.2. Description

Accor S.A. is a French multinational hospitality company that owns, manages and franchises hotels, resorts and vacation properties. It is the largest hospitality company in Europe, and the sixth largest worldwide.

Accor operates in 5,300 locations in over 110 countries. Its total capacity is approximately 777,714 rooms. It owns and operates brands in many segments of hospitality:

Luxury (Raffles, Fairmont, Sofitel), premium (MGallery, Pullman, Swissôtel), midscale (Novotel, Mercure, Adagio), and economy (ibis, hotelF1). Accor also owns companies specialized in digital hospitality and event organization, such as onefinestay, D-Edge, ResDiary, John Paul, Potel & Chabot and Wojo (Accor G. , 2023) as it is shown on the figure below.

"Feel Welcome" is the slogan of Accor Hotels, the following are Accor Hotels' values: encouraging trust, entrepreneurial innovation, respect for all employees (everyone is an ambassador for Accor Hotels), client enthusiasm, a competitive spirit, and long-term performance.



Figure 4: segments of hospitality of Accor

Source: Cbinsights

2.5.1.3. Accor in Morocco

The ACCOR group is present in Morocco. The French group adheres to the obligations stated in agreement signed in 1998. The aims mentioned in the agreement have been fulfilled. Accor now has a geographically balanced portfolio with a comprehensive offer customized to each of Morocco's major regions. The group is well-positioned in the country's two major tourist cities, with 46 percent of its capacity focused in Marrakech and Agadir.

2.5.2. Presentation of Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa

The hotel is a kasbah inspired by Arabo-Berber art. It's a fusion of Moroccan hospitality, Moroccan flavourings, and French opulence, it gives this 5-star Agadir hotel a real sense of well-being and escape, in this peaceful resort, well-being is on the menu. The spa combines French thalassotherapy expertise with Moroccan beauty rituals, and the restaurant selection includes everything from gourmet to detox cuisine.

It is about 1.5 kilometers from the city center, 1 kilometer from restaurants and bars, and 20 kilometers from Agadir Al-Massira airport. It has immediate beach access as well as its own private sandy beach.

Although a visitor is unwilling to overnight at the Sofitel Thalassa Agadir, there are many benefits to explore the hotel and its surroundings.

Non-guests, for example, are permitted to visit the hotel's thalassotherapy spa and enjoy its services and treatments. This is an excellent alternative for those seeking a day of rest and refreshment.

Furthermore, the hotel's restaurants and bars are accessible to everyone, providing a variety of eating alternatives and pleasures. Guests may have a tasty dinner or a cool beverage while admiring the breathtaking panorama of the ocean.

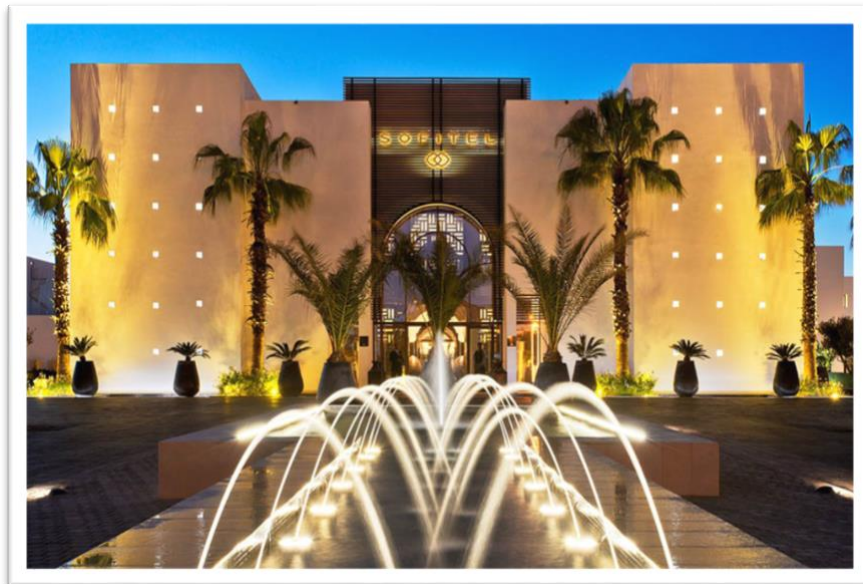


Figure 5: Sofitel Agadir Thalassa's entrance

Source: Google

3. Research methodology and results of the survey

3.1. Secondary research

My study in my literature review centered on marketing in the tourism industry, specifically considering the importance of social media marketing as a tool for enhancing tourism. The research report looked into the electronic word of mouth (EWOM) and its relationship with social media, also the benefits of using social media marketing to promote tourism firms. The research additionally looked into tourism in Morocco, with a particular focus on the city of Agadir. In order to better understand the effect of social media on tourism in the area, statistics on social media in Morocco were cited.

Finally, I demonstrated it by presenting a case study of a hotel company particular hotel in Agadir. To successfully answer my research problem, I clarified the study approach that aligns with our research goal in secondary research. As a consequence, I had to choose between conducting a qualitative or quantitative study. I selected quantitative research because I believed that it would be a suitable fit for what I wanted to study.

3.2. Primary research

I have opted to conduct quantitative research for my thesis report. I gathered and evaluated statistical data to answer my research topic. I employed the snowball sampling technique. This method entails finding volunteers and share it to other people who are usually available to the research and capable of contributing to the study. I shared my questionnaire using my own account on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, allowing me to reach a diverse population that included Moroccans and foreigners with a specific interest in Morocco. I additionally shared the survey to other Moroccan communities on social media channels.

My research study included a wide sample diversity, including both male and female respondents from various nations. I was capable of reaching a fairly diverse audience via social media sites like as Facebook and Instagram, allowing me to include people from all over the world. As an outcome, the research included people from Morocco as well as Bulgaria, Azerbaijan, Italy, Morocco, Vietnam, France, the Czech Republic, Pakistan, Spain, Turkey, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

This diversity of the sample will enable me to gather valuable information about the influence that social media marketing has on the brand image of the Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea and Spa, as it will allow me to gain a more complete knowledge about the viewpoints and experiences of various individuals dealing with different concerns.

Considering the survey questions, the research topics focus on the usage and purpose of social media and its impact on hotels, namely the Sofitel Thalassa & Spa Agadir. The questions cover topics such as social media usage habits, preferred information sources when choosing a hotel, the impact of social media content on the reservation process, and the impact of a hotel's presence on social media on its reputation.

I chose a sample size of 111 individuals for my research study. This sample was selected based on my approach, and I consider that it is of adequate size to test my observations and reach a respectable range resolution in my findings. While larger sampling sizes can sometimes be beneficial. In this part, I will look at all the necessary information from the survey, which I selected as a quantitative approach within the framework of my research, in order to generate an overall overview that summarizes all the quantitative study's findings.

The data on table 1 indicates the number and percentages of males and females in each category, with females accounting for 52.3% of the total and males accounting for 47.7%.

Table 1: Gender distribution of the sample

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	58	52.3	52.3	52.3
	Male	53	47.7	47.7	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The age range of a group of participants is shown in the following table 2. They are divided into year ranges, and the chart shows the number of people in each category, the percentage of total people, and the cumulative percentage up to that segment.

I can observe that the most common age group is 18-25 years old, accounting for 55.9% of all responses. This implies that over half of the group's members are between the ages of 18

and 25. Those aged between 26 and 35 years old are the second most prevalent, accounting for 28.8% of all responses.

Table 2: The age range of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	13 - 18 years old	3	2.7	2.7	2.7
	18 - 25 years old	62	55.9	55.9	58.6
	26 - 35 years old	32	28.8	28.8	87.4
	36 - 45 years old	12	10.8	10.8	98.2
	46 - 55 years old	1	.9	.9	99.1
	56 - 65 years old	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The table 3 illustrates the average number of answers by the socio-professional group. Based on the statistics, students make up the most dominant socio-professional group, accounting for 44.1% of all respondents. Employees are the next most prevalent group, accounting for 39.6% of all respondents.

Table 3: The occupation of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Civil servant	2	1.8	1.8	1.8
	Employee	44	39.6	39.6	41.4
	Entrepreneur	1	.9	.9	42.3
	Freelancer	9	8.1	8.1	50.5
	Unemployed	1	.9	.9	51.4
	Retired	3	2.7	2.7	54.1
	Student	49	44.1	44.1	98.2
	Student and employee	1	.9	.9	99.1
	Other	1	.9	.9	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

The table 4 demonstrates the frequency and percentage variation of the 111 respondents' travel intentions.

A large proportion (72.1%) of all respondents indicated traveling for vacation purposes, while 11.7% traveled for family/personal business and 10.8% traveled for work. A tiny minority of respondents (5.4%) mentioned they traveled to see relatives or friends.

Table 4: Purpose of travel by respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Family/Personal Business	13	11.7	11.7	11.7
	Vacation	80	72.1	72.1	83.8
	Visit friends/relatives	6	5.4	5.4	89.2
	Work	12	10.8	10.8	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

3.3. Research method

This survey's questions are closed questions, which allow respondents to select from a preset list of alternatives. Single response questions, in which responders pick one option from a list, and questions with multiple choices, in which people surveyed can select many alternatives from a given list, are the types of closed questions used in this survey. Moreover, scaled questions are utilized to assess the effectiveness and direction of participants' opinions and thoughts about a certain product or service.

The questionnaire has been built with four distinct axes to gather data on:

- Social media usage,
- Traveler behavior,
- Hotel impression,
- Demographics.

For calculations, I employed the SPSS program. The data collected were entered into the SPSS software on several quantitative and qualitative characteristics, and from which I will extract the main variables that relate to our variables that relate to our research objective.

In order to analyze the findings obtained, I first chose Analysis of Demographic and Travel Characteristics of a Sample Population, by filling up the statistical tables with the frequencies and the graphic representations that resulted from them.

Secondly, I intended to apply the crosstabulation analysis in the SPSS program to explore the relationships of dependences discovered by the desired characteristics and I applied the chi-square test.

To determine whether the variables are independent, I compared the p-value to the significance level.

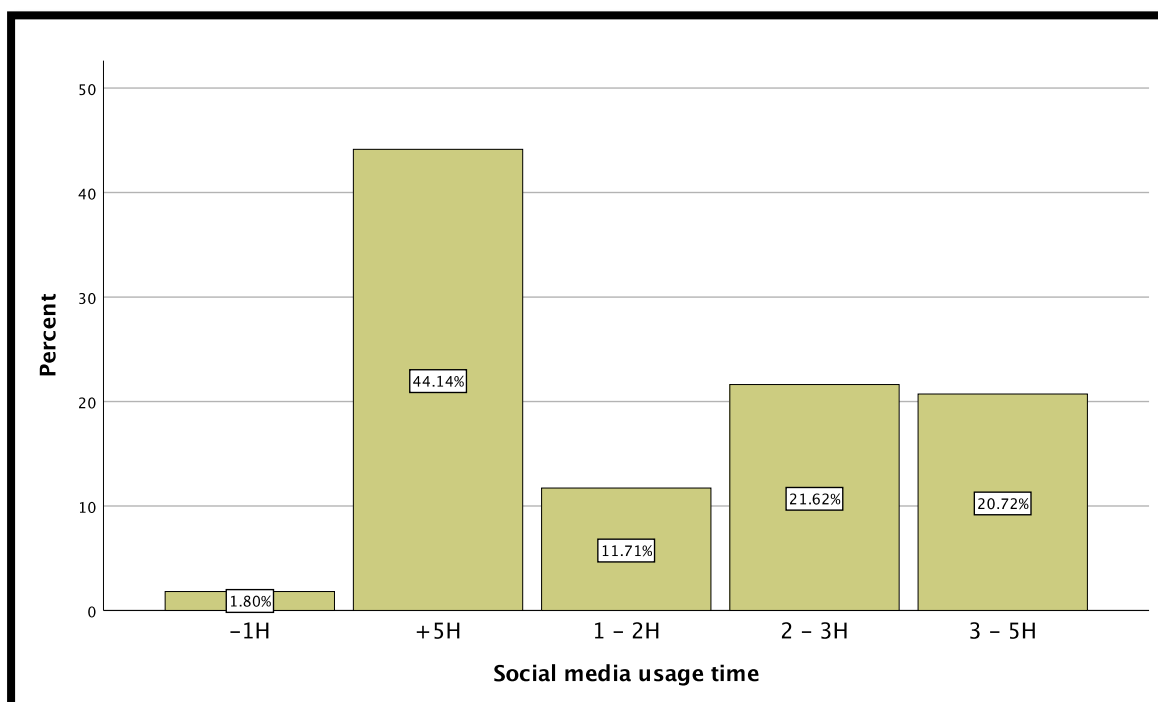
- $P\text{-value} \leq \alpha$: The variables have a statistically significant association (Reject H_0)
- $P\text{-value} > \alpha$: Cannot conclude that the variables are associated (Fail to reject H_0)

4. Research results and evaluation

In this part, I indicated my results of cross-tabulation analyses performed to examine the link between certain questions from the questionnaire. The research conducted enabled me to find patterns as well as connections among many variables, which may offer helpful insight into travel behavior and hotel evaluations. I looked at the connections between social media usage and hotel perception, in addition to the connections between traveller's actions and hotel impressions. I aim to acquire a greater comprehension of how all of these variables combine and influence hotel reputation and brand image in the current period through these investigations.

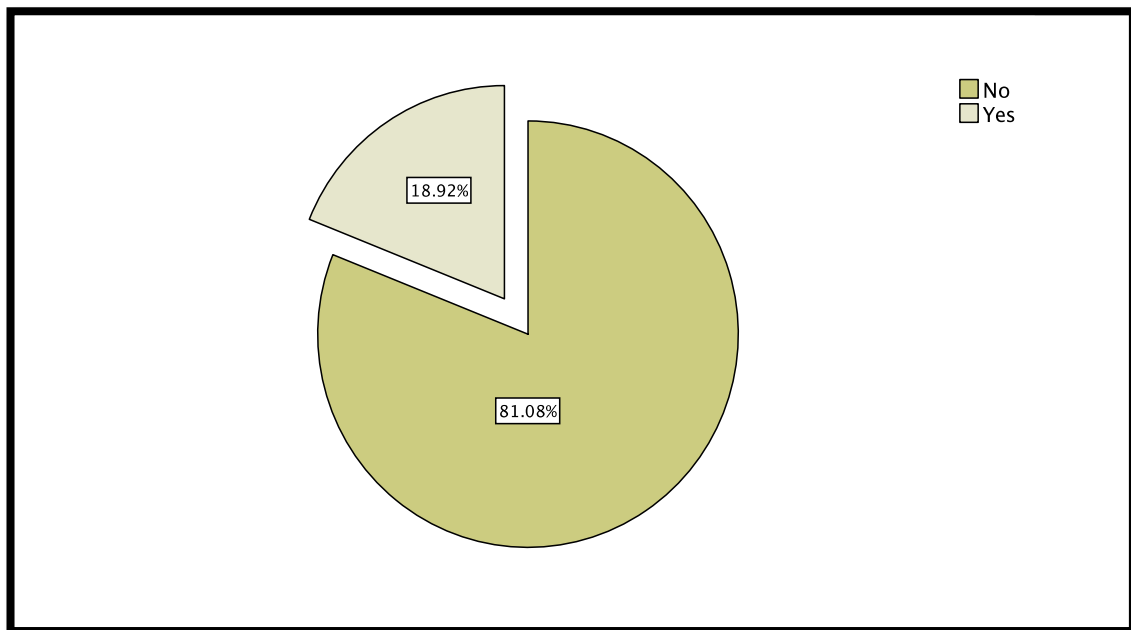
The bar chart number 7 displays the outcomes of the question social media usage time, which questioned participants about the amount of time they spend on social media on a daily basis. Of the 111 respondents, 44.1% spend over 5 hours on social media, while 20.7% spend a period of 3 to 5 hours. Only 1.8% of those questioned indicated they spend less than an hour a day on social media. This indicates that a large percentage of those who responded use social media frequently, and the hotel could take advantage of this by maintaining an active social media presence in order to interact with customers and advertise its offerings.

Figure 7: Social media usage time among respondents



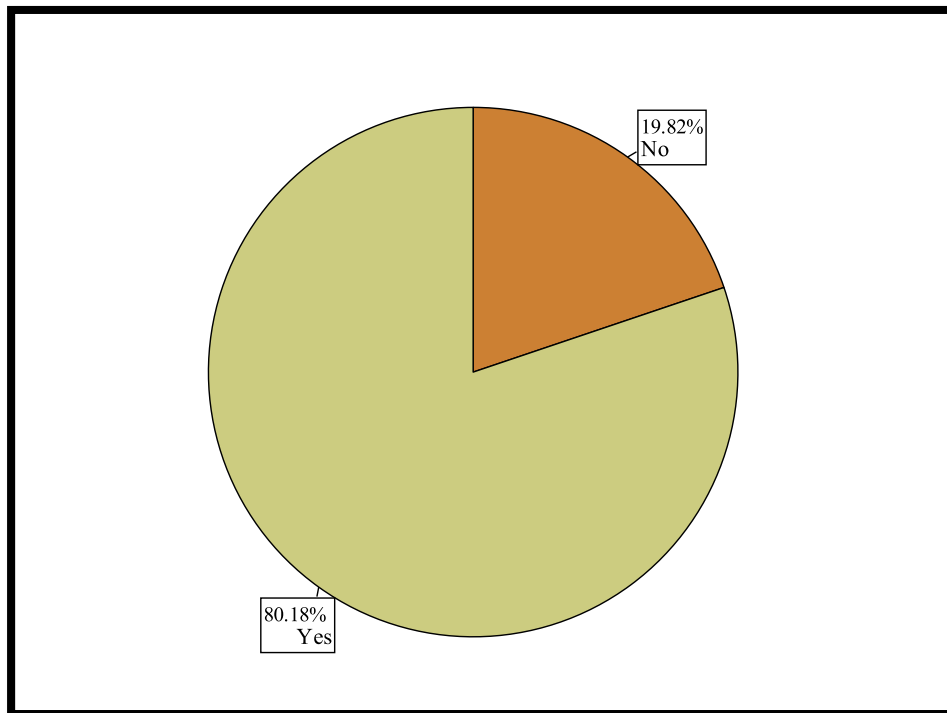
The figure 8 illustrates the results of the questionnaire question (Q12), which asked respondents if they had previously subscribed to the Hotel Sofitel Thalassa's social media pages. There was a total of 21 (18.9%) with a “Yes” responses and 90 (81.1%) "No" responses among the 111 respondents. This shows that just a small percentage of those who responded have subscribed to the hotel's page.

Figure 8: The Hotel's page subscription



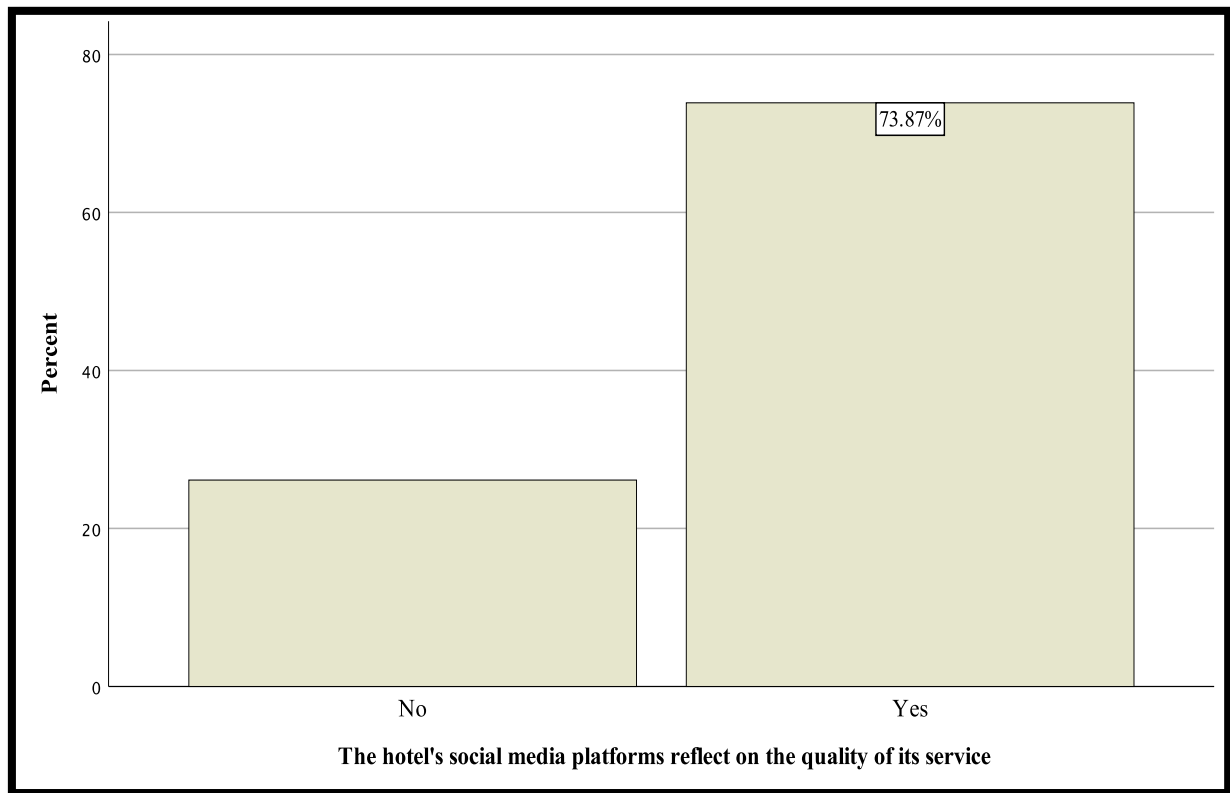
The following chart number 9 demonstrates the percentage and frequency of respondents that checked the hotel's social media profiles before booking. Out of 111 respondents, 89 (80.2%) looked at the hotel's social media accounts before booking, while 22 (19.8%) did not. This indicates that a significant percentage of people depend on social media pages to discover more about the hotel in advance of making their bookings.

Figure 9: Hotel's social media checking before booking



On figure 10 when I asked if the hotel's social media channels reflect the quality of its service, 73.9% replied "Yes," while 26.1% responded "No." It demonstrates that a large percentage of respondents think the hotel's social media platforms reflect on the quality of its service, while a minority think otherwise. This outcome shows that the hotel's social media presence could have a significant influence in determining consumers' opinions of the quality of its services. It may also mean that the hotel's management should pay attention to its online communication strategies and guarantee that it is consistent with the hotel's general quality of service aims.

Figure 10: The Influence of Hotel Social Media Platforms on Service Quality



Based on the crosstabulation table 5, social media networks and influencers are important information sources for respondents of all ages. The majority of respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 selected social media networks and influencers as their favourite sources of information. The largest number of respondents chose influencers were between the ages of 26 and 35. These findings indicate that social media networks and influencers are essential connections for reaching a younger generation in hotel marketing and promotions.

In my results the chi-square test findings show a significant association between age range and preferred source of information, with a p-value less than 0.05.

Table 5: Preferred source of information when choosing a hotel with age

			Preferred source of information when choosing a hotel					Total
			Social media networks	Word of mouth	Booking platforms	Influencers	Comparator	
Age	13 - 18 years old	Count	1	2	2	2	2	3
	18 - 25 years old	Count	29	45	19	56	50	62
	26 - 35 years old	Count	6	26	19	24	28	32
	36 - 45 years old	Count	2	10	9	8	10	12
	46 - 55 years old	Count	1	1	0	1	1	1
	56 - 65 years old	Count	0	1	1	1	1	1
Total		Count	39	85	50	92	92	111

Table 6: The Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	146.475	20	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio	130.202	20	<0.001
N of Valid Cases	111		

According to the crosstabulation figure 11, among a total of 111 those who responded, 95 expressed negative reactions impacting the hotel's image. Out of them, 62 respondents claimed that the negative reaction had "somewhat influenced" them, 24 were "highly influenced," and 9 showed "low influence."

Surprisingly, all 16 respondents who stated that unfavourable reactions had no effect on the hotel's image had "low influence" over the reaction. This implies that those who are less influenced by unfavourable reactions are less likely to see a negative impact on the hotel's image.

In general, crosstabulation underlines the need to regulate unfavourable social media comments, especially among individuals with a greater probability to be influenced by them.

According to the chi-square tests table 7, there is an important connection between a negative reaction on the hotel's page and the degree of its influence on that reaction. The Pearson chi-square value is 64.310, with a p-value less than 0.001, demonstrating that the correlation is not due to chance.

Figure 11: Negative reaction on the page affects the hotel's image by the level of influence over this reaction

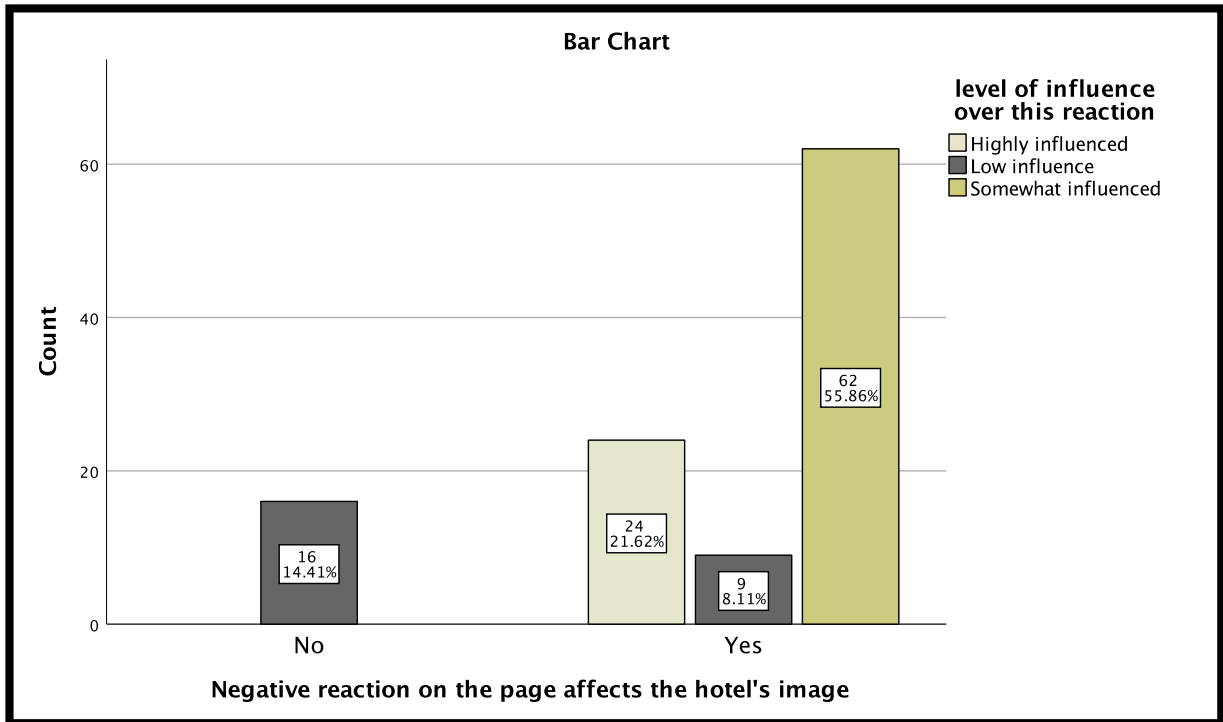


Table 7: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	64.310	2	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio	58.885	2	<0.001
N of Valid Cases	111		

According to the crosstabulation table 8, 69 of the 111 respondents were aware of the Hotel Sofitel Thalassa & Spa Agadir. Among those who were aware of the hotel, 21 had subscribed to the hotel's social media accounts, while 48 had not. According to the subscription

status, a surprisingly large number of persons who were conscious of the hotel had not subscribed to its page (about 69.6%).

Overall, it appears that the hotel is well-known among the responders. However, the hotel's page has a rather low subscription rate.

The chi-square tests table 9 demonstrate a significant connection between the 2 variables (Pearson chi-square = 12.930, p.001)

Table 8: Hotel Sofitel Thalassa & Spa Agadir awareness with the hotel's page subscription

		The Hotel Sofitel Agadir Thalassa's page subscriptions		Total
		No	Yes	
Hotel Sofitel Thalassa Sea & Spa	No	42	0	42
Agadir's awareness	yes	48	21	69
Total		90	21	111

Table 9: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.930	1	<0.001
Likelihood Ratio	16.280	1	<0.001
N of Valid Cases	111		

The following chart 12 illustrates a cross-tabulation of the results of age and page reactivity of the hotel's online presence which relates to how rapidly and effectively the hotel interacts with customer's inquiries, comments, and complaints on its social media sites. It considers elements such as page loading speed, simplicity, and the hotel's capacity to react immediately to customer issues and opinions.

The charts the number and percentage of respondents in each age and rating combination shown. where:

- 1: Poor
- 2: Unsatisfactory

- 3: Satisfactory
- 4: Very satisfactory
- 5: Outstanding

This crosstabulation has 110 respondents in total, with a different percentage of respondents in each age category. The average page responsiveness rating across every age category is 2.

According to the results of the chi-square test results table 10, the value of the p-value is less than 0.001, indicating that there is a significant connection between the two variables. As a result, we may conclude that age and page responsiveness ratings are not independent and that there is a relationship between them.

There are 110 valid values in this data collection, comprising a mean of 2.67, a median of 2.00, with a mode of 2 on table 11.

Figure 12: The Hotel Sofitel's page responsiveness with the age

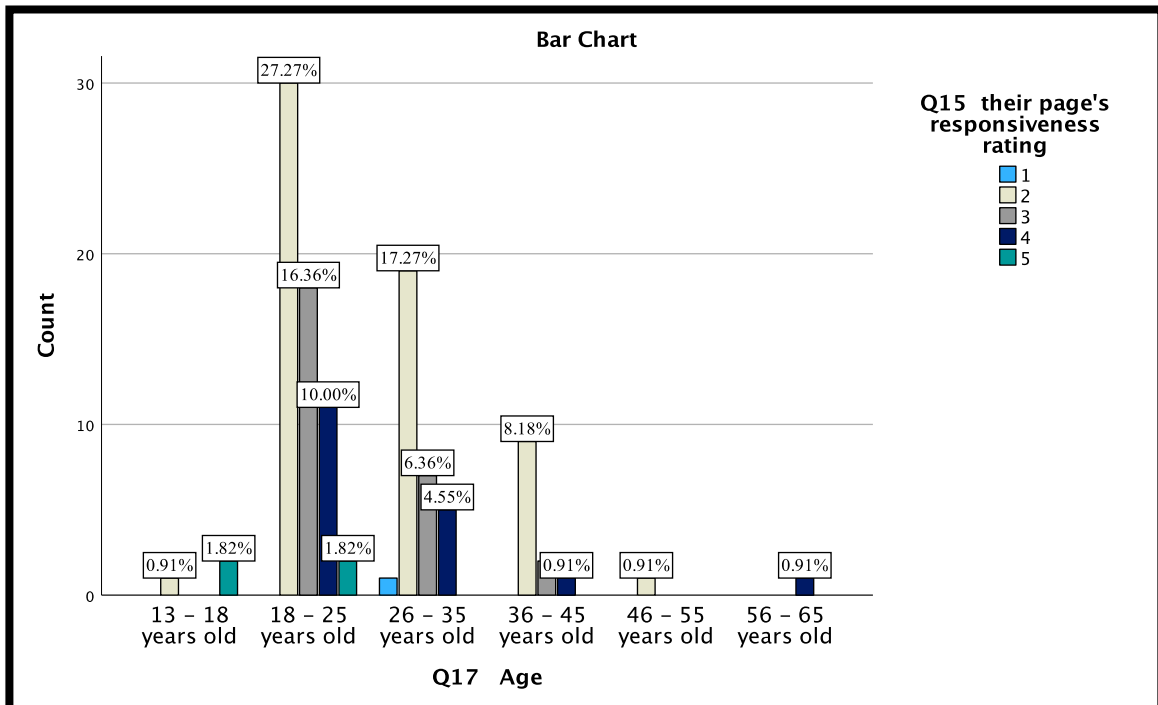


Table 10: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	47.211	20	<0.001
N of Valid Cases	110		

Table 11: Statistics of their page's responsiveness rating

N	Valid	110
	Missing	1
Mean		2.67
Median		2.00
Mode		2

5. Conclusions and suggestions

5.1. Conclusions

The majority of respondents (72.1%) stated that they travelled for vacation, 11.7% for family/personal business, and 10.8% for working. Only 5.4 percent of the respondents surveyed stated that they travelled to visit family or friends.

In my research, according to the findings, social media networks and influencers are essential sources of information for respondents of all ages, especially those aged between the ages of 18 and 35. This demonstrates the importance of social media marketing in reaching the target demographic and promoting the location.

Moreover, I observed that the degree of influence over a reaction impacted how people evaluated the influence of a negative reaction on a hotel's image. With a p-value less than 0.001, the study found a significant connection between the level of influence over the reaction and the negative influence on the hotel's image.

The results of the survey indicate that the hotel in issue is well-known among the individuals who responded, yet it has a low membership rate on its social media page.

Finally, responders aged 18 to 35 years old rated the hotel's page responsiveness low evaluations, indicating that there may be problems with the hotel's social media approach that may be addressed to increase its efficacy.

According to the findings of my study, I have confirmed the relevance of using social networks for the hotel Sofitel Thalassa Hotel & spa in order to grow and have an impact on its brand's reputation among internet users.

5.2. Suggestions

Nowadays, the internet is a tool used by individuals of every age, and social media sites are becoming more and more common.

According to the findings of the research I have conducted, I have confirmed the importance of using social media for the hotel in order to grow and have a positive impact on its brand's reputation among online users. This provides a chance for the hotel. Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa is working in an increasingly competitive hotel industry, which makes it important to integrate the world of social media into its communication strategy.

Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa is present on multiple social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), but the majority of people who responded expressed dissatisfaction with its reactivity, which presents a problem for the hotel, knowing that it is important to interact with customers of all kinds in order to present the product. The majority of the target of Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa is also influenced by the negative reactions of other Internet users.

At the end of our research, I may provide the following recommendations Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa for improving its social media presence in order to maintain its favourable reputation and brand image:

- **Users' opinions:** Consider the needs and feedback of Internet users stated on the hotel's pages, taking advantage of reviews as a monitoring tool to determine what improvements can be made.
- **Negative comments:** better handle comments in general, and especially negative remarks, by responding with respect, openness, and transparency, clarifying the source of the problem observed because the consumer always prefers a truthful response.
- **Develop the influencer marketing tactics:** Because social media influencers have been recognized as a valuable source of information, collaborating with appropriate influencers may help the hotel boost its reach and interaction.

- **Giveaways or deals:** Plan games and competitions, as well as events, to provide life to the hotel's page and improve its online presence.
- **Using hashtags:** Create hashtags relating to the hotel and give benefits such as coupons or other incentives to those who share their posts to motivate clients to share their experiences on social media.
- **Create a TikTok account:** It is a great way for the hotel to appeal to more individuals and communicate with potential consumers. Using TikTok to create brief, engaging, and aesthetically appealing elements will help the hotel in showcasing its unique attractions and facilities, enhancing its visibility and reputation.

By applying these approaches, the hotel will be able to build an effective online presence and improve its reputation among Internet users, resulting in an increase in reservations and revenues.

6. Summary

To summarize, the marketing and communication department plays an essential role in developing fresh marketing approaches to promote the hotel's goods and services as well as reinforce the brand's reputation in order to attract more customers.

The impact of social media on tourist behaviour has captured the interest of tourism marketing experts who are working to adjust to client expectations through the use of effective communication tactics such as social media marketing that present an accurate perspective of what they offer.

My research intended to evaluate the influence of social media on tourism marketing along with its impact on the hotel's reputation, taking the case of Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa. Although the hotel is known, our research discovered a lack of reactivity on its main page.

The hospitality industry is quite sensitive, and any error in tourism marketing is likely to result not only client loss but also negatively impact the hotel's services. As a consequence, mastering and controlling social media marketing is essential for the hotel in order to effectively communicate its products.

With the increasing importance of online communication, Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa needs to develop a quickened action plan in order to catch up with its key competitors and reorganize its structure in favor of effectively advertising the hotel. Managers in the marketing and communication departments must receive training and invest in social media for the purpose to provide extra value to clients and satisfy their needs.

According to my study, social media has a significant impact on the hospitality industry, and hotels must include social media into their communication strategies in order to boost their online presence and reputation. My research discovered that, while the value of using social media in helping the hotel expand and enhance its brand's reputation among internet consumers was approved. This allows the hotel to distinguish itself from its competition and attract more clients.

Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea & Spa is present on several social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Nevertheless, most of the individuals who answered the survey indicated unhappiness with its responsiveness, which would be a challenge for the hotel, knowing how crucial it is to communicate with consumers of all types

to successfully promote its offering. A significant number of respondents is likewise influenced by the negative reactions of other internet users.

Some suggestions were presented in the research in order to fix these concerns and enhance the hotel's social media presence. To begin, it is suggested that the hotel takes into account comments and criticism expressed on the hotel's sites, using reviews as a measuring tool to evaluate the improvements that may be completed. The hotel can offer a more personalized experience for their clients by knowing their wants and preferences, which may assist enhance customer loyalty and engagement.

Second, the hotel should react to opinions in general, and particularly unfavourable comments, with respect, honesty, and transparency, identifying the root of the problem noticed, because the customer always appreciates an honest response. This can assist in overcoming negative reactions and improve the hotel's overall image.

Third, implementing influencer advertising techniques could help the hotel in increasing its appeal and interaction. Social media influencers have been considered an essential source of information, and working with the right influencers may help the hotel connect with its audience and expand its reach. This is highly beneficial for reaching out to new audiences and acquiring new consumers.

Fourth, hosting prizes, competitions, and events may breathe fresh energy into the hotel's online presence and boost its online visibility. These strategies may boost interaction and encourage user-generated content, which can help the hotel's exposure and reputation.

Finally, building a TikTok account is an excellent approach for the hotel to reach out to more people and engage with potential customers. Using TikTok to generate short, engaging, and visually pleasing features would help the hotel promote its distinctive attractions and services, increasing its exposure and reputation.

By applying these suggestions, the hotel will be able to establish an effective online presence and boost its reputation among internet users, leading to an increase in reservations and profits. These suggestions might also be valuable for other hotels in the business looking to improve their online reputation and marketing tactics. The implementation of social media into the hotel's communication plan is more essential than ever, and by following these suggestions, the hotel can stay ahead of the competition.

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Appendix

Hello, my name is Ahlam Boubekri, I'm in my last semester of a bachelor's in commerce and marketing at MATE Kaposvár Campus. As part of my final thesis, I'm conducting this investigation, to find out how social media can impact and influence the reputation of hotels such as Sofitel Thalassa and Spa Agadir in accomplishing their goals. I sincerely hope that you will take the time to respond to the questions below. Thank you for your cooperation.

1- Which social media do you usually use?

1. Facebook
2. Instagram
3. LinkedIn
4. Snapchat
5. YouTube
6. TikTok
7. Twitter
8. WhatsApp
9. Telegram
10. Pinterest
10. None of them

Other:

2- How much do you use social media each day?

-1H

1 - 2H

2 - 3H

3 - 5H

+5H

3- Which source of information do you prefer / rely on when choosing a hotel?

1. Social media networks
2. Word of mouth
3. Booking platforms
4. Influencers

5. Comparator websites

4- Before booking, do you ever check a hotel's social media pages?

1. Yes
2. No

5- Do you think that the hotel's pages on the social media platforms reflect of the quality of its service?

1. Yes
2. No

6- If yes, have ever been influenced by a social media content while a booking process?

1. Yes
2. No

7- Was it a positive or a negative influence?

1. Positive
2. Negative

8- Could a negative reaction on the page affects the hotel's image?

1. Yes
2. No

9- What is your level of influence over this reaction?

1. Low influence
2. Somewhat influenced
3. Highly influenced

10- Have you ever hear of Hotel Sofitel Thalassa & Spa Agadir?

1. Yes
2. No

11- How did you hear about the hotel Sofitel Thalassa Agadir?

1. Search engine
2. Facebook post/group
3. Twitter post

4. Instagram post/story
 5. Paid social media advertising
 6. Email
 7. Radio
 8. TripAdvisor
 9. TV
 10. Newspaper
 11. Word of mouth
- Other:

12- Are you subscribed to the Hotel Sofitel Thalassa's page on social media?

1. Yes
2. No

13- Which social media platform do you follow them on?

1. Facebook
 2. Instagram
 3. YouTube
 4. LinkedIn
 5. TripAdvisor
 6. Pinterest
- Other:

14- How satisfied are you with the information shared through their social media ?

- 1- Very unsatisfied
- 2- Unsatisfied
- 3- Neutral
- 4- Satisfied
- 5- Very satisfied

15- How could you rate their page's responsiveness?

- 1: Poor
- 2: Unsatisfactory
- 3: Satisfactory
- 4: Very satisfactory

5: Outstanding

16- On what purpose you use social media for?

1. Networking
2. For creative expression
4. Deals and promotions
5. Stay up to date with news and current events
6. Stay in touch with what my friends are doing
7. Join Groups that Share your Interests
8. Share your opinion
9. Share photos or videos with others

17- what is your age range?

1. Between 13 and 18 years old
2. Between 19 and 25 years old
3. Between 26 and 35 years old
4. Between 36 and 45 years old
5. Between 46 and 55 years old
6. Between 56 and 65 years old
7. Between 66 and 75 years old
8. Over 75 years old

18- Are you?

1. Male
2. Female

19- What is your socio-professional category?

1. Student
 2. Employee
 3. Retired
 4. Freelance
 5. Civil servant
 6. Unemployed
- Other:

20- Which country are you living in?

21- How many times during the year do you travel?

22- what is the most common purpose of your travel?

1. Work
2. Family/Personal Business
3. Vacation
4. Shopping
5. Visit Friends/Relatives

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Statement

The undersigned, Ahlam Boubekri, a student majoring in Commerce and marketing, declares that the thesis is my own work, that I have handled the literature used correctly and that I have complied with the relevant legislation.

Kaposvár, 2023, April 30



student's signature

Statement

I, the undersigned, Dr. Krisztina Bence-Kiss, assistant professor, declare that the thesis complies with the relevant regulations of the Kaposvár Campus of the Faculty of Economics of the MATE, both in terms of content and form.

I have read the final version of the thesis; I agree to its submission.

Kaposvár, 2023, April 30



supervisor's signature

DECLARATION

on authenticity and public assess of final thesis

Student's name: Ahlam Boubekri
Student's Neptun ID: EC1GPR
Title of the document: Tourism and social media marketing, case study of "Hotel Sofitel Agadir Thalassa Sea and Spa"
Year of publication: 2023
Department: Faculty of economic sciences institute of marketing and management

I declare that the submitted final thesis is my own, original individual creation. Any parts taken from another author's work are clearly marked, and listed in the table of contents.


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I recommend/don't recommend¹ the final essay/thesis/master's thesis/portfolio to be defended in a final exam.

The document contains state secrets or professional secrets: yes no^{*2}

Place and date: _____Kaposvár, 2023_____ year _____04_____ month____30____ day



Internal supervisor

¹ Please underline applicable.

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