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Going Green in Egyptian Hotels: Importance and Implementation of Water and Energy Practices

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ABSTRACT

Due to the growing interest in environmental issues, many businesses have become more environmentally friendly. The hospitality industry worldwide is beginning to adopt the concept of a green environment. Hotels are more likely to invest in the implementation of green practices into many of their facilities activities. Such practices will help decrease the operating costs and increase the profits. It is important for hotel managers to be aware that green practices will not only help to protect the environment, but will increase revenue as well. A hotel uses large amounts of energy and water for daily operations that puts stress on the environment. Therefore, hotel management, staff and guests should be actively encouraged to participate in environmental practices. Moreover, government authorities may adopt a significant role to facilitate green practices. With awareness increasing, tourists are more likely to look for eco-friendly hotels. Accordingly, hotels are beginning to implement various innovative methods to increase the green concept throughout operations.

The research aims to investigate the importance and the implementation of green practices in hotels in Egypt, regardless of being certified and non-certified. It will depict the current status of green practices in Egyptian hotels, specifically in two main areas—water and energy consumption. It aims to determine the degree of awareness toward green practices and their level of implementation.

To achieve the objectives, the research used a quantitative and qualitative data collection approach through reviewing literature and distributing questionnaires. The research instrument utilized was online questionnaires. A benchmark was developed by gathering reliable information from the green certifications' benchmarks in Egypt. The population of the study included only 5-star hotels in Egypt, which are 150 hotels. This category represents the niche market of hotels that is more capable to adopt such relatively new trend. A link to the online questionnaire was emailed to all population elements, from which 49 were valid for data analysis, giving a response rate 32.6%.

Results of the research indicated that there is a significant difference between importance and implementation of green practices in Egyptian Hotels; with variance in each group practices. The exception was for those practices that are related to water conservation in green-certified five-star hotels; since most of the practices that were considered important, from managers' points of view, were implemented in their hotels. The outcome will give hotels recommendations to enhance green practices and encourage potential implementation.

Key Words: Going Green, Water Practices, Energy Practices, Green Certifications, Hotels, Egypt

1 INTRODUCTION

Many people are beginning to realize that the Earth is quickly becoming inhospitable due to the huge amount of air, land, and water pollution. They began to recognize that there is an ideal opportunity for people to take a step toward a greener Earth to help future generations. Based on such a perspective, many corporations have become more environmentally friendly.

Tourism is one of the most promising drivers for growth of the world economy. While tourism has many advantages for any country, there are negative impacts associated with it as well. Some of these may include air, water and noise pollution, negative social aspects, labor problems, and detrimental effects on animal and plant life, along with natural resources (Bohdanowicz, 2005; Dodds & Butler, 2005; Holden, 2008; Graci, 2009; Hall & Lew, 2009; Micioni, 2009). Tourism and the environment go hand in hand. People travel far and wide to enjoy recreational activities such as skiing in the mountains or surfing on tropical beaches (University of Nebraska, 2010). Green Hotel Association (2006) mentioned that the environment and human well-being are connected. The hotel industry cannot ignore how their practices influence the environment (Brown, 1996; Claver-Cortes *et al.*, 2007; Chan, 2008). In reality, a hotel uses a massive amount of energy and water for daily operations that puts stress on the environment. A hotel alone cannot maximize the energy and water savings. However, everyone involved including staff and customers should be encouraged to participate in such saving practices. Energy and water consumption has the largest effect on a trip's ecological issue (Zein, *et al.*, 2008). With environmental laws and awareness increasing, tourists are more likely to look for eco-friendly hotels. Accordingly, some hotels are beginning to implement various innovative methods to increase the green concept throughout operations. (Manaktola and Jauhari, 2007). In fact, the size and reach of tourism sectors make it critically important, from a global resource perspective. Slight changes toward going green have significant positive impacts (UNEP and UNWTO, 2012). The hospitality industry worldwide is starting to become environmentally viable by the implementation of green practices into their facilities. It is important for hotel managers to understand that going green will not only help the environment. But, it will decrease operating costs, allowing for increases in profits and enhancing employee retention rates (Elvis, 2013). Therefore, the hoteliers have to begin making the changes necessary for a greener tomorrow.

Accordingly, the purpose of this research is to investigate the importance and the implementation of green practices in hotels in Egypt, regardless of being certified or non-certified. It aims to determine *to what extent* there is awareness toward green practices and their level of implementation. Moreover, it would develop guidelines and recommendations based on the outcome to help implement green practices in hotel's facilities.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Going Green History

The history of going green emerged in the 1980s and the 1990s. It was a new trend within all industries, which proved its predominance through the years (Kirk, 1995; Roarty, 1997). There are some green hotels that have been in existence for more than thirty years (Pizam, 2009).

In 1992, at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the worlds' leaders agreed on a global environmental movement called Local Agenda 21 (LA21). This is the well-known initiative to start off the local programs in the 21st century by developing programs and putting them together to promote green practices around the world (Leslie & Muir, 1996; Ashkin, 2007; Rachel, 2007; Klepsch & Schneider, 2012).

In 1993, Green Hotels Association started a campaign called '*Save the Earth*,' which spread around the United States very quickly. This campaign authorized the hotels to give guests the option of not changing the sheets and towels daily. By this practice alone, hotels saved approximately \$6.50 a day per occupied room and 5% of the utilities (Honey, 2008).

Many of hotel companies have developed a number of reporting tools to protect the environment. For instance, in 1997, Hilton International took an initiative action to create Hilton Environmental Reporting (HER), which is a benchmarking tool of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) used for environmental reports (Bohdanowicz *et al.*, 2005).

2.2 Concept of Green Hotel

The concept of a green hotel is revolving around a lodging property that performs a lot of practices and programs like energy and water savings and waste management to protect the earth (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Kasali, 2009; Romppanen, 2010; Hatane *et al.*, 2012). Green hotels perform practices to reduce the negative impacts on the environment globally (Friend, 2009; Chan & Hawkins, 2010; Radwan *et al.*, 2010), such as recycling and purchasing eco-products (Abu Taleb, 2005; Han *et al.*, 2011). They decrease the ecological impact by reducing the energy, water and waste use (University of Nebraska, 2010; China Luxury Travel Network, 2010). On the other hand, guests may perceive going green from a different perspective, such as using renewable energy and planting organic food (Siegenthaler, 2010).

The green hotel concept is an umbrella that includes the ecolodge. Eco-hotels are environmentally friendly properties that incorporate stable green practices into their operations with the goal of preserving the Earth. Such hotels are expected to utilize distinctive strategies to minimize the negative effects on the earth; by employing strategies to use the water, energy and material in productive ways and by recycling and reducing solid waste (Alexander, 2002; Zsolnai, 2002; Han *et al.*, 2010; Romppanen, 2010). Eco-hotels are built in a way to protect the environment, culture and the surrounding natural ecosystem. They also help increase the awareness among all partners, including employees, guests and local people to be more environmentally friendly (Wood, 2002).

2.3 Reasons for Going Green

There are two reasons to go green. First, there is an environmental imperative to adopt green practices to conserve the environment. Second, business stakeholders are already concerned about

the environment. They require businesses to implement green practices by reducing the misuse of natural resources and negative impacts on them. More pressure from the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), stakeholders and consumers is put on businesses; green practices can also be implemented (Gonzalez-Benito & Gonzalez-Benito, 2005; Saha & Darnton, 2005; Esty & Winston, 2009).

Many publications reviewed fields for going green within hotel industry, and mentioned some of their issues as well. These are usually occurring in four areas: *energy* (Kirk, 1996; Middleton & Hawkins, 1998; Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Bohdanowicz & Martinac, 2003; Dascalaki & Balaras, 2004; Bohdanowicz, 2005; Bohdanowicz *et al.*, 2005; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006; Ashkin, 2007; Budeanu, 2007; Zein, *et al.*, 2008; Romppanen, 2010; Klepsch & Schneider, 2012; Baerbel, 2014); *water* (Salen, 1995; Kirk, 1996; Alexander, 2002; Cespedes Lorente *et al.*, 2003; Essex *et al.*, 2004; Bohdanowicz, 2005; Kasim, 2007; Holden, 2008; Zein, *et al.*, 2008; Romppanen, 2010); *waste* (Kirk, 1996; Alexander, 2002; Bohdanowicz, 2005; Kasim, 2007; Zein, *et al.*, 2008; Romppanen, 2010); and *pollution* (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998; Gössling, 2002; Mensah, 2006; Bohdanowicz, 2006b; Graci & Dodds 2008; Holden, 2008; Zein, *et al.*, 2008; Hall & Lew, 2009; Romppanen, 2010; Halbe, 2013).

2.4 Benefits for Going Green

Going green creates a good relationship with the local people and reducing poverty (OEDC, 2012). By implementing green practices, hotels will have many benefits: (1) showing the hotels' dedication toward the environment, not only their profits; (2) helping to enhance the natural scenery; (3) making the environment healthier; (4) helping the hotels to reduce their costs (Abu Taleb, 2005; Tzschentke *et al.*, 2008; Radwan *et al.*, 2010); and (5) improving the hotel image (Anglada, 2000; Anguera & Ayuso, 2000; Morrow & Rondinelli, 2002; Gonzalez, 2004; Bohdanowicz *et al.*, 2005).

Going green could bring additional benefits to employees (Graci & Dodds, 2008; Esty & Winston, 2009); achieve competitive advantage (Graci & Dodds, 2008; Esty & Winston, 2009; Lee *et al.*, 2010); develop customer loyalty (Manaktola & Jauhari, 2007; Claver-Cortes *et al.*, 2007; Esty & Winston, 2009; Zhang *et al.*, 2012); optimize financial benefits (Bentley, 2007; Claver-Cortes *et al.*, 2007; Doody, 2008; Katz, 2008; Esty & Winston, 2009; Esty & Simmons, 2011); and support law compliance, social responsibility and risk management (Graci, 2002; Graci & Dodds, 2008).

2.5 Green Hotel Certifications

The certification procedure is the strategy by which an outsider gives affirmation to the organization that an item, process, administration framework complies with certain requirements (Toth, 2000). Certification is a method for guaranteeing a movement or that an item meets certain standards. Inside the tourism industry, distinctive associations have created affirmation programs measuring diverse parts of tourism for quality within the entire industry (Bien, 2006). The application and participation in all green certification programs, eco labels, awards, codes of conduct and environmental/sustainable management systems are handled on a completely voluntary basis; with no obligation for joining an environmental initiative (EPA, 1998). When a hotel has made the

decision to accept and apply green practices, they can be implemented without the use of outside experts, following the manuals and directions.

It was found that certifiers and verifiers are a boundary for hotels to be green (Chan, 2008). Certification fees are too high especially for auditing, assessment and accreditation (Toth, 2000; Chan, 2008; Tzschentke *et al.*, 2008). However, going green will decrease hotels' expenses and increase their revenue (Tzschentke *et al.*, 2008). Hotels that take eco-certification programs raise their room rates. Such a case might promptly increase income for every guest, but it might cut down the volume of guests. It might drive the guests to go for less expensive hotels that do not apply green practices (Houdre, 2008; Stark, 2009). Certification helps to improve the green practices, expand benefits and give accurate data to guests (Mowforth & Munt, 2009; Geerts, 2014). Green certification is done by ensuring hotels are truly green.

The beginning was back in 1992, when Hilton International and other chains made one of the primary moves towards general green certifications in the hotel industry. They were establishing individuals from the International Hotels Environment Initiative (IHEI), which has 86 individuals including 11,200 hotels around the world. Then, it was later merged with the International Tourism Partnership (Honey, 2008). Hotels like Hyatt and Disney have their own certification programs. This additionally changes the edge in which hotels can have their own benchmarks and certifications (Bergin, 2010).

In December 1998, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) distributed the primary report to welcome *Green Globe* to the business sector and urged governments and NGO's to use it. Suddenly, Green Globe became the biggest system in the field and the only one with a genuine worldwide scope, despite its disadvantages in the market up until now (Font, 2002; Griffin & Delacey, 2002; Ustad, 2010).

Green Hotel Certifications in Egypt: In Egypt, there are two categories of green hotel certifications—National and International. The *national* certification is Green Star Hotel (Green Star Hotel, 2015, 2016), whereas the *international* category includes four types of certifications: Green Globe (Green Globe Certification, 2015), Green Key (Green Key, 2016), Green Key Global (Green Key Global, 2016), and Travelife (Travelife, 2016). Each of these certifications has its objectives, standards, procedures, and rating levels.

2.6 Hotel Green Practices

There are *nine* areas that a hotel can apply significant green practices to its facilities. These include: (1) training programs for staff (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006; Kim *et al.*, 2011) and guests (Diener *et al.*, 2008; Millar & Baloglu, 2008; Morgan, 2009; Romppanen, 2010); (2) housekeeping in terms of guest rooms (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006; Hanna, 2008; Kasavana, 2008) and laundry (Getz, 2000; Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Riggs, 2007; Green Hotel Association, 2015); (3) meeting rooms (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; McPhee, 2006; Serlen, 2008); (4) food and beverage facilities including restaurants and kitchens (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Jones, 2002; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006); (5) energy productivity either for lighting or air conditioning and heating system (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; ESCWA, 2003; Bohdanowicz, 2006a; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006; Diener *et al.*, 2008; Zein, *et al.*, 2008; Dalton *et al.*, 2009); (6) water protection (ESCWA, 2003; Bohdanowicz, 2006a; Kasavana, 2008; Godwin, 2012); (7) waste management

(Bohdanowicz, 2006a; Baker, 2008; Lee, 2009); (8) indoor environmental quality (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; ESCWA, 2003; Diener *et al.*, 2008); and (9) Recreation & Transportation (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Shdeifat *et al.*, 2006; Baker, 2009).

There are numerous examples for implementing green practices in hotel chains around the World. Among them are The Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) (Klepsch & Schneider, 2012); Marriot Chain (Dasha, 2007; Blanke & Chiesa, 2008; Lee, 2009); Hyatt Chain (Fedrizzi & Rogers, 2002; Mandelbaum, 2008); Fairmont Hotel and Resorts (Fairmont Hotel and Resorts, 2008); Accor Chain (Blanke & Chiesa, 2008); and Ramada (Liz, 2016).

In Egypt, tourism policy incorporates green practices as a general objective (Helmy & Cooper, 2002; Helmy, 2004). However, *El-Gouna town* located 22 km north of Hurghada, was constructed based on being environmentally friendly. This town was awarded by the *Green Globe* certification, honoring its engineering and ecological responsibility. It draws in vacationers from various nations particularly Germany, UK and Belgium (Ibrahim, 2009).

The Ministry of Tourism (MoT) focuses on green practices in the hotel business sector. It created Green Sharm Initiative which is based on the 4 pillars of emissions mitigation, biodiversity, waste management best practices and water conservation. These pillars translate into 33 quantifiable projects to deliver a low carbon, environmentally friendly city by the year 2020. It is the primary example in the Middle East that will upgrade *Sharm El Sheik* to be a worldwide green city. It has reduced the gas outflow by 36%, decreased the hotel guestroom energy by 13%, diminished water utilization by 13% for each current lodging and 28% for every new hotel, decreased the water wastage by 75%, achieved level 3 out of 5 in the strong waste administration, achieved level 2 out of 3 in sewage treatment, and decreased the coral reef destruction by 5% every year (OECD, 2012).

In 2013, the hotels sector in Egypt attempted to outfit 100,000 hotel rooms with new clean innovations and solar-heated water, which would take 5 years to be installed. Also in 2013, 45 hotels set up a plan to install solar-heated water system framework (Baerbel, 2014).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The main objective of this research is to investigate the importance and the existence of green practices in hotels in Egypt, regardless of being certified or non-certified. It will depict the current status of green practices in Egyptian hotels, specifically in two main areas—*water* consumption and *energy* consumption. It aims also to determine to what extent there is awareness toward green practices and their level of implementation. Moreover, it would develop recommendations based on the outcome to help implement green practices in hotel's facilities. The following research hypotheses will be tested:

H. There is a significant relationship between hotel's management awareness of green practices and its commitment for implementation.

However, such hypothesis can be divided, based on certification into:

H.a: There is a significant positive relationship between hotel's management awareness of green practices and its commitment for implementation in green *certified* hotels.

H.b: There is a significant negative relationship between hotel's management awareness of green practices and its commitment for implementation in green *non-certified* hotels.

3.2 Research Technique and Instrument Development

To achieve the objectives, the research used a quantitative and qualitative data collection approach through reviewing literature and distributing questionnaires. Due to the large number of hotels, the research considered only 5-star hotels in Egypt, either being green certified or non-certified hotels. The reason for such consideration is that this category represents the niche market of hotels that is more capable to adopt such relatively new trend. Also, this segment is often managed by world-wide chains that usually have experience and provide money for such leading researches.

The research instrument utilized was online questionnaires. It was developed based on the reliable benchmark that was gathered from literature review as well as the *five* green certifications' benchmarks in Egypt—both national (Green Star Hotel) and international (Green Globe, Green Key, Green Key Global, and Travelife). The respondents were asked to indicate the various green practices used in their hotels concerning *water* and *energy* consumption (since they represent the large amount of hotel's consumption), by using a *Likert* scale. It was divided into *two* sections: (1) the degree of *importance*, which has three choices ranging from Not Important, Partially Important and Important; whereas (2) the level of *implementation*, which had three choices ranging from Not Implemented, Partially Implemented and Implemented. Finally, a pilot survey was conducted with some experts, including national certification manager and hoteliers, before distribution process.

3.3 Questionnaire Distribution

The population of the study included 150 five-star hotels in Egypt, according to the Egyptian Hotel Guide. In order to secure high responsiveness, trials were made to reach each hotel to determine the potential respondent either by phone and/or email. Then, a link to online questionnaire was emailed to all population elements. It was directed to the manager who is responsible for implementing the green practices in the hotel (i.e. general manager, engineering manager, executive housekeeper, and the green department manager if available, etc.). In order to get a high response rate, following-up and a reminder email was sent to those who did not answer. Out of the 150 distributed questionnaires, only 49 were valid for data analysis, with a response rate 32.6%.

4 RESULTS PRESENTAION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Green Certified and Non-Certified Hotels

The results revealed that there were 60 green certified five-star hotels, which represented 40% of the total population. They were certified with the following details—26 had national green certification, 25 had international green certification, and 9 hotels had both types, national and international. The other 90 five-star hotels were non-certified as green properties. As mentioned before the total responses were only 49 questionnaires, which were valid for data analysis, with a response rate 32.6%. Responses were almost distributed equally between green-certified (24 hotels, representing 49%) and non-certified (25 hotels, representing 51%) hotels. Hotels were divided into the main five tourist areas in Egypt— North West Coast, Cairo, Red Sea and Sinai, Suez Canal and Upper Egypt. Most of the responses were gathered from the Red Sea and Sinai area (18 green-

certified and 16 non-certified, with sum of 34 hotels out of 49 total responses, representing 69.4%); followed by Cairo area (3 green-certified and 5 non-certified, with a total of 8 hotels, representing 16.3%); and North West Coast area (2 green-certified and 3 non-certified, with a total of 5 hotels, representing 10.2%). Such a case is not surprising, since the high proportion of population (87 hotels out of 150 five-star hotels, representing 58%) is located in the Red Sea and Sinai area. Moreover, all responding hotels were managed by chains.

4.2 Green Practices Assessment

This section represents an assessment of green practices in terms of the degree of *importance* and the *implementation* level in the surveyed hotels. Both green-certified and non-certified hotels will be discussed separately. Managers were asked to evaluate the degree of importance and the implementation level of green practices in their properties from their own point of view. The practices were collected from all the benchmarks of the green certifications in Egypt, from which only two main areas were covered—*water* and *energy* consumption. Mean values and standard deviation have been calculated for each practice in the investigated areas, in terms of importance and implementation scales. *Mann-Whitney* test was employed in order to compare analysis results for these practices, using descriptive statistics including means of scores, resulting in *p*-values at level (0.05), to identify if any significance relationship is recorded.

4.2.1 Green-Certified Hotels

The total number of Green-certified five-star hotels was 24 hotels representing 49% of total respondents. The following table (1) presented the comparison between the importance and implementation level of the green practices in the green-certified hotels.

Table 1: Comparison between the Importance and Implementation of Green Practices for Green-Certified Hotels

Green Practices		Importance Degree		Implementation Level		P-Value
		M	SD	M	SD	
1. Water Consumption						
W1.	Monitoring the water consumption in each department at least once a month.	3.00	0.00	2.95	0.22	0.078
W2.	Installing water-saving devices in the appropriate places (flow regulators, water flow sensors, self-closing taps, etc.).	2.83	0.38	2.61	0.66	0.035*
W3.	Installing low flow showerheads that do not exceed 9 liters per minute.	2.88	0.33	2.90	0.30	0.364
W4.	Following the instructions for saving water and energy during operation of dishwashers (must be displayed near the machine).	2.88	0.33	2.71	0.63	0.067
W5.	Maintaining regularly plumbing fixtures and piping in order to avoid water losses.	2.98	0.15	2.83	0.38	0.013 *
W6.	Reusing the water used in the kitchen to wash fruits and vegetables for watering the garden.	2.51	0.70	1.90	0.85	0.000*
W7.	Watering grass and plants early in the morning and late at night to limit evaporation.	3.00	0.000	2.95	0.22	0.078
W8.	Cleaning the swimming pool in a way that will reduce the water	2.78	0.41	2.29	0.71	0.000 *

	wastage such as manual and mechanical processes, filtration maintenance etc.					
W9.	Using less chemical detergents like phosphate-free or whitener-free in the laundry.	2.76	0.58	2.56	0.63	0.075
W10.	Giving guests a choice on having linens exchanged.	2.93	0.34	2.85	0.47	0.215
Overall Score		2.85	0.21	2.85	0.47	0.211
2. Energy Consumption						
E1.	Monitoring the energy use at least once a month for each department.	3.00	0.00	2.95	0.22	0.078
E2.	Using any renewable energy system like solar system and wind turbines.	2.90	0.43	1.88	0.80	0.000*
E3.	Using energy efficient light instead of Fluorescent light and depending on natural light more than artificial lights.	2.98	0.15	2.83	0.38	0.013*
E4.	Installing energy-efficient equipment like water heaters, air conditioners, dishwashers etc.	2.85	0.35	2.54	0.55	0.001*
E5.	Switching off equipment when not in use.	2.93	0.26	2.83	0.49	0.134 *
E6.	Depending on natural light more than artificial lights.	2.85	0.35	2.66	0.61	0.042*
E7.	Having a thermostat system in the guest rooms to control maximize and minimize temperatures	2.93	0.26	2.71	0.55	0.013*
E8.	Changing the air conditioning filters equipment regularly.	2.98	0.15	2.80	0.40	0.007 *
E9.	The air conditioning automatically switches off when windows are open.	2.76	0.53	1.37	0.72	0.000 *
E10.	Keeping the water temperature at 24°C to save the energy.	2.80	0.45	2.34	0.75	0.001*
Overall Score		2.95	0.45	2.49	0.55	0.003*
M=Mean, SD= Standard deviation, <i>p</i> -value= Significant difference at level 0.05.						

Firstly, concerning the **water consumption** green practices, there was *no* significant difference between the scores of importance degree and implementation level (*p*-value= 0.211). Therefore, such a result revealed that most of the practices that were considered important, from managers' points of view, were implemented in their hotels. However, there were some practices that showed significant gaps, such as W6 and W8 (*p*-value= 0.000).

Regarding the *importance* of those practices, the highest degrees were recorded to practices W1 and W7, which showed also the highest level of *implementation* with means 3.00 and 2.95 respectively. On the other hand, the least important practice was also the least implemented one, i.e. W6 practice with means 2.51 and 1.90 respectively.

Secondly, concerning the **energy consumption** green practices, there was a significant difference between the importance and the implementation level (*p*-value= 0.003). Therefore, such result exposed that most of the practices that were considered important, from managers' points of view, had not been implemented in their hotels. The highest two gaps were dedicated to practices E2 and E9 (*p*-value= 0.000). The most important and implemented practice was E1 (with Means 3.00 and 2.95 respectively). Conversely, the least important and implemented practice from was E9 (with Means 2.76 and 1.37 respectively).

According to the mentioned results, the research hypothesis related to green-certified hotels; **H.a**: There is a significant positive relationship between hotel's management awareness of green

practices and its commitment for implementation in green *certified* hotels; could be *accepted* regarding **water consumption** green practices. On the other hand, it could be *rejected* regarding **energy consumption** green practices.

4.2.2 Green Non-Certified Hotels

Twenty five green non-certified hotels were studied, representing 51% of total respondents. The following table (2) presented the comparison between the importance and implementation level of the green practices in the non-certified hotels. Firstly, concerning the **water consumption** green practices, there was a significant difference between the scores of water consumption importance and implementation level (p-value = 0.000). Most of the practices were important from the manager perspective, but they did not implement them. Practices W4, W8, W9 and W10 were the highest in gaps (p-value = 0.000).

Regarding the *importance* of those practices, the highest degrees were recorded to practices W5 (M= 2.95) and W4 (M= 2.93). However, the least important practices were W6 (M= 2.48) and W3 (M= 2.67). Regarding the *implementation* level of those practices, the highest implemented practice was W1 (M= 2.79), followed by practice W5 (M= 2.74). Conversely, the least implemented practice was W6 (M= 2.07).

Secondly, concerning the **energy consumption** green practices, there was also a significant difference between the importance and the implementation (p-value= 0.021). Some practices recorded a significant gap like E2, E4, E5, E6 and E9 (p-value= 0.000). Although, managers thought they were very important practices, they did not implement them in their hotels.

Moreover, it was noted that all practices have been evaluated as highly *important* with a mean that scored 2.85, as shown in Table 2. Three of most important practices were E4, E5 and E6 (M= 2.95), while the least important practices were E10 (M= 2.57) and E8 (M= 2.88). Regarding the *implementation* level, the most implemented practice was E1 (M= 2.88), followed by practice E7 (M= 2.79); whereas the least implemented practice was E2 (M= 2.12).

Table 2: Comparison between the Importance and Implementation of Green Practices for Non-Certified Hotels

Green Practices		Importance Degree		Implementation Level		P-Value
		M	SD	M	SD	
1. Water Consumption						
W1.	Monitoring the water consumption in each department at least once a month.	2.86	0.41	2.79	0.41	0.217
W2.	Installing water-saving devices in the appropriate places (flow regulators, water flow sensors, self-closing taps, etc.).	2.76	0.43	2.57	0.54	0.040*
W3.	Installing low flow showerheads that do not exceed 9 liters per minute.	2.67	0.52	2.50	0.79	0.132
W4.	Following the instructions for saving water and energy during operation of dishwashers (must be displayed near the machine).	2.93	0.26	2.52	0.59	0.000*
W5.	Maintaining regularly plumbing fixtures and piping in order to avoid water losses.	2.95	0.21	2.74	0.49	0.006*
W6.	Reusing the water used in the kitchen to wash fruits and vegetables for watering the garden.	2.48	0.79	2.07	0.94	0.019*

W7.	Watering grass and plants early in the morning and late at night to limit evaporation.	2.83	0.43	2.64	0.65	0.061
W8.	Cleaning the swimming pool in a way that will reduce the water wastage such as manual and mechanical processes, filtration maintenance etc.	2.81	0.50	2.14	0.83	0.000*
W9.	Using less chemical detergents like phosphate-free or whitener-free in the laundry.	2.79	0.46	2.19	0.85	0.000*
W10.	Giving guests a choice on having linens exchanged.	2.90	0.29	2.45	0.59	0.000*
Overall Score		2.80	0.20	2.50	0.58	0.000*
2. Energy Consumption						
E1.	Monitoring the energy use at least once a month for each department.	2.93	0.26	2.88	0.32	0.232
E2.	Using any renewable energy system like solar system and wind turbines.	2.93	0.34	2.12	0.88	0.000*
E3.	Using energy efficient light instead of Fluorescent light and depending on natural light more than artificial lights.	2.90	0.29	2.67	0.52	0.006*
E4.	Installing energy-efficient equipment like water heaters, air conditioners, dishwashers etc.	2.95	0.21	2.40	0.76	0.000*
E5.	Switching off equipment when not in use.	2.95	0.21	2.62	0.53	0.000*
E6.	Depending on natural light more than artificial lights.	2.95	0.21	2.64	0.53	0.000*
E7.	Having a thermostat system in the guest rooms to control maximize and minimize temperatures	2.93	0.26	2.79	0.46	0.044*
E8.	Changing the air conditioning filters equipment regularly.	2.88	0.32	2.74	0.54	0.074
E9.	The air conditioning automatically switches off when windows are open.	2.93	0.26	2.19	0.88	0.000*
E10.	Keeping the water temperature at 24°C to save the energy.	2.57	0.49	2.24	0.87	0.018*
Overall Score		2.85	0.46	2.53	0.63	0.021*
M=Mean, SD= Standard deviation, <i>p</i> -value= Significant difference at level 0.05.						

According to the mentioned results, the research hypothesis related to non-certified hotels; **H.b**: There is a significant negative relationship between hotel's management awareness of green practices and its commitment for implementation in green *non-certified* hotels; could be accepted regarding green practices for either **water** or **energy consumption**.

5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the large number of hotels, the research considered only 5-star hotels in Egypt, either being green certified or non-certified hotels. Nevertheless, other hotel categories, in Egypt, should be surveyed to determine whether they apply green practices to their facilities. Exploring the barriers for going green, as well as the gap and opportunities to have green hotel certifications might be investigated. Other areas of applying green practices that might be used in hotels could be studied, such as waste management, pollution elimination, green purchasing, and training for both employees and guests. The guests' behaviour toward green practices as well as their concern and positive attitude toward the environment conservation might be recommended for future research. Another significant dimension that should be further investigated in future research is the role of Governmental Authorities and NGOs in encouraging hotels to adopt green practices.

6 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of the research is to investigate the importance and the existence of green practices in hotels in Egypt. Such objective is fulfilled through the field study, specifically in the two main areas of water consumption and energy consumption. Also, the research explored the current status of Egyptian 5-star hotels, in terms of green certification. It depicted whether they are being green certified or non-certified, based on theoretical review and practical study. There were 60 green certified five-star hotels, which represented 40% of total population. They were certified with the following details—26 had national green certification, 25 had international green certification, and 9 hotels had both types of certifications. The other 90 five-star hotels had not any green certifications.

Furthermore, hotels were divided into the main five tourist areas in Egypt— North West Coast, Cairo, Red Sea and Sinai, Suez Canal and Upper Egypt. Most of the responses were gathered from the Red Sea and Sinai area, followed by Cairo area and North West Coast area. Such a case is not surprising, since the high proportion of population is located in Red Sea and Sinai area. Moreover, all responding hotels were managed by chains.

The research can conclude that green certified and non-certified managers have a relatively high awareness regarding green practices. However, the implementation level was limited in the non-certified hotels than the green-certified ones.

Results of the research indicated that there is significant difference between importance and implementation of green practices in Egyptian Hotels; with variance in each group elements. The exception was for those practices that are related to water conservation in green-certified 5-star hotels; since most of the practices that were considered important, from managers' points of view, were implemented in their hotels. Therefore, extensive concern should be maintained toward increasing awareness and implementation. Green-certified and non-certified hotels should improve their water and energy green practices to optimize the use of resources. Moreover, areas for future research are recommended.

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The effect of Hotel Ownership Type on Hotel Website Contents

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the literature on the evaluation of the hotel website contents. It drives to examine the effect of hotel ownership type (chain hotels vs. independent hotels) on hotel website contents by conducting a content analysis. To map the multi-approach research area of hotel website contents, the study draws on literature in the fields of hotel E-Marketing, hotel websites, internet, social media, and mobile applications. The population frame for this study is the list of all five-star hotels in Egypt and Croatia to examine the effect of hotel ownership type on hotel website contents. Although, the findings show that the contents of five-star chain hotels in Egypt significantly vary from five-star chain hotels in Croatia ($p < 0.00$), the contents of five-star independent hotels in Egypt do not significantly vary from five-star independent hotels in Croatia ($p > 0.05$). A natural extension of this research would thus be comparing these results with the importance of the hotel website dimensions from the customers' perspectives. The nature of this study can be considered as a distinctive research in the field of E-Marketing commonly and E-Marketing in chain and independent hotels in both Egypt and Croatia precisely. For practitioners, the checklist of the hotel website content by adding new features to the dimensions like social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Trip advisor, YouTube... etc.) and mobile applications should be precisely considered into account which it was noted that some of the hotel websites had other contents rather than the checklist. As the first integrative analysis of the hotel websites between Egypt and Croatia, this study tends to understand the current tendency, argues for its wider relevance, and paves the way for its future trends.

Key Words: *Chain hotels, Independent hotels, Hotel website, Egypt, Croatia*

INTRODUCTION

In an ever-changing marketplace, where the only certainty is uncertainty, corporate success comes from consistently creating, distributing and using innovative technologies. Globalization, the renovation of the enterprise, the presence of digital establishment, and transformation of tourism and hospitality fields are four powerful worldwide changes which have altered the business environment (Laudon, 2002; Wu and Lin, 2009).

The importance of information technology in the hospitality industry, principally the World Wide Web, has enhanced enormously in the prior period. As information is the vital spark of the hospitality field, effective use of information technology is fundamental for marketing and promotional actions (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2006). From the viewpoint of customers, the internet permits them to connect directly with hotels, to request information and to obtain services and products without any geographical and time limits. For hoteliers, in specific marketing and sales managers, the successful structures of hotel websites are lower distribution costs, greater profits, and a more market share (O'Connor, 2003). The Internet in the hospitality industry has provided a great chance for independent firms to compete in various markets with the similar opportunities of the big players. Like businesses across the tourism industry, hotels are embracing this technology and working dynamically to use websites to offer customers the ability to search information and book rooms online (O'Connor and Frew, 2002). Hence, the internet is a central communication tool and is very essential for independent hotels to use it as an effective marketing tool.

While the prospects accessible by the Internet in Egypt appear readily apparent, Essawy (2011) clarified that there is still much speculation on exactly what impact it will have on marketing independently owned hotels. Independent hotels in Egypt were not examined cautiously and broadly in prior studies. There is an absence of practical evidence in terms of what hotel managers are actually thinking and more significantly doing in response of the dispersion of the Internet in hotels.

It is auspicious to mention that hospitality more and more needs to embrace innovative methods to improve their competitiveness. It is also crucial to emphasis on the most operative means of marketing, advertising, information services, and allocating goods on hotel websites to both local and universal marketplaces. Moreover, the internet is an important channel of distribution to customers. Progressively, customers can undertake their entire tourism product search and booking online and, therefore, they require flexibility, specialized, accessible, interactive products and to communicate with different hotels. This increases the importance of internet use and the content of hotel websites.

Consequently, the foremost aim of this study is to evaluate the hotel website contents for both chain and independent hotels. Hence, this study exemplifies the current state, investigates the content of hotel websites, and thus contributes to the progress of independent hotels. Therefore, the research problem can be stated mainly in the following question “**what is the current situation of**

analyzing five-star hotel website contents in Egypt and Croatia?" From the main research problem, sub-questions can be stated in the following questions:

1. Are there differences of hotel website contents in chain hotels between Egypt and Croatia?
2. Are there differences of hotel website contents in independent hotels between Egypt and Croatia?
3. Which hotels have more contents on their websites; chain hotel websites or independent hotel websites in Egypt?
4. Which hotels have more contents on their websites; chain hotel websites or independent hotel websites in Croatia?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Internet

The Internet is a powerful tool for providing product or service information to customers. Customers are individuals with computer knowledge and with willingness to obtain more in-depth information relating to their query through a computer connected to the Internet. Effectiveness of the Web site will determine further consumer actions. The purpose of the website is to motivate customer on purchases. Attracting those customers is an essential to the effectiveness of the Web site (Panian and Jakovic, 2006). The Internet is the most operative when used as marketing and advertising tool. It provides opportunities for an organization to enrich its business in a practical and cost-effective method. Thus, the Internet can be invested to accomplish and conduct marketing research, better serve customers, distribute products faster, extend new markets, communicate more powerfully with corporate buddies, and solve customer's complications. The Internet is likewise a valuable tool for collecting brainpower on potential markets, clients, and competitors, in addition to linking information about companies and/or products (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Bui et al., 2006; Cai et al., 2004; Garces et al., 2004; Honeycutt et al., 1998; Law and Hsu, 2005; Lee et al., 2006;). In this scope, the Internet has rapidly changed the way enterprises and organizations run as the number of Internet users' increases second after second.

Around 40% of the world population has an internet connection today. It was less than 1% in 1995. The number of internet users has greater than before tenfold from 1999 to 2016. The **1st billion** was gotten in 2005, the **2nd billion** in 2010, and the **3rd billion** was reached in 2014 (*Internet Live Stats*, 2016).

In Egypt, the number of Internet users has dramatically increased, growing from 424,111 (18%) in 2000 to 34.8 million in 2016 (38.6%) and ranks 14 in Internet penetration. In Croatia, the number of Internet users represents 3.13 (73.8%) million in 2016. Nevertheless, the use of e-commerce in Egypt, has been disappointing. For instance, a report by the Networked Readiness Index (2016) ranks Egypt 96 while Croatia ranks 54 out of 139 countries with respect to the use of e-commerce.

The prominence of Internet applications in the hospitality industry has been emphasized by academic researchers and practitioners. To hospitality consultants, the Internet provides a means for them to sell their services and products to universal customers without any geographical or time borders (Law and Hsu, 2005). In line for the growing number of websites, it is difficult for hotels

attract guests and even convert them to real consumers (Auger, 2005). Furthermore, 56% of the potential customers in the U.S used the Internet to book their hotels, however online hotel reservations in 2004 reached approximately \$15 billion (Yesawich, 2005). In a study in Europe, 63% of hotels owns a website with direct access to prices and other services (Knauth, 2006). Thus, the website content richness plays a pivotal role to attract visitors and transform them into real customers.

Among (67%) of the overall online chain hotel reservations comes from brand websites (TIAA, 2005). Concerning effort, chain hotels appear to be more conscious of providing the website facilities (O'Connor, 2003). E-customers are fonder of higher class hotels and thus websites of branded hotel chains are more appealing to them. Although the benefits of online marketing, hotels still have faced extensive challenges since the Online Travel Agent (OTA)'s web site still handles a substantial part of online reservation (Law and Cheung, 2006).

Website evaluation relates to the presence of specific website features/characteristics, irrespective of an evaluation framework is included or not. It encompasses evaluation of (a) website design, (b) website content, and (c) website design and content (Ip et al., 2011). Definitely, this study is to focus on the evaluation of hotel website content.

2.2 Hotel website contents "features"

Numerous studies have evaluated websites in the tourism and hospitality field which can be categorised as either empirical or theoretical research. Theoretical studies develop or modify concepts or approaches (Robbins & Stylianou, 2003; Tong, Duffy, Cross, Tsung, & Yen, 2005), while empirical studies validate or verify hypotheses or approaches through experimental investigations (Chung & Law, 2003; Teo & Pian, 2004; Yeung & Law, 2004; Zafiropoulos et al., 2005; Zafiropoulos and Vrana, 2005; Au Yeung & Law, 2006; Law & Cheung, 2006; Lee & Kozar, 2006; Cheung & Law, 2009; Lin, Zhou, & Guo, 2009; Horng & Tsai, 2010; Tsai et al., 2010; Tang, Jang, & Morrison, 2012; Salavati and Hashim, 2015; Salem and Cavlek, 2016).

Most of first studies were conducted to examine the contents and features of hotel websites. After these studies, many have been conducted to measure the depth and detail of information that can be given to customers as well as the depth of the collected customer information (richness). Richness occurs because data movement is faster, deeper and, greater than it is in the traditional market. As customers have additional product/service information, businesses' clearness among prices and retailers increase (Sigala, 2003).

One of the first studies, Murphy et al. (1996) conducted a study to investigate the contents and features of hotel websites. They examined 20 chain hotels and 16 independent hotel websites, in the US. They noted that 32 different features that were on those 36 websites. The different features were then positioned into four comprehensive nonexclusive classifications: service and information, promotion and marketing, interactivity and technology and management. A uniformed but personalized e-mail survey was sent to all 36 hotels asking particular questions about their websites

experiences. They emphasized that Cyber-hoteliars must, supposed, examine how these features influence or develop the task, margin, procedure, marketing and maintenance of their websites.

Furthermore, Wan (2002) studied the web site content of worldwide tourist hotels and tour suppliers in Taiwan. The assessment system comprised of three general user criteria: user interface, diversity of information and online booking. Respectively, each website was appraised by grading the overall excellence of user interface and, diversity of information on a 5-point rating scale. Outcomes show that “diversity of information” received the lowest score. More customer hotels provide on-line booking systems than do tour suppliers. Findings also indicated that the use of the Internet in Taiwan’s tourism/hospitality industry is mainly for advertising, not marketing. Schegg et al. (2002) examined 125 websites of Swiss hotels using a benchmarking approach that classified website attributes on five factors: trust, cyber marketing, service process, customer relationship and value creation.

Likewise, Baloglu and Pekcan (2006) evaluated the websites of upscale (4- and 5-star) hotels in Turkey based on the following four dimensions: interactivity, navigability, marketing and functionality. They determined that although the websites of 5-star hotels are better developed than those of 4-star hotels, all websites must be developed across all dimensions apart from navigability. These authors also stated that hotel companies should continuously modify the designs of their websites and update their technological capabilities to adapt them to their customers.

Another study in this concern is the results of Zafiroopoulos and Vrana (2006), they assessed the framework for hotel websites, which categorized web information services into six information dimensions and also used managers and customers’ perspectives. They determined that a hotel website must provide numerous vital features to stand-in a better online experience and claimed that “weak hotel website design will cause a cost of 50% of prospective sales due to customers being unable to find what they want, and a loss of 40% of prospective repeat visits due to initial negative experience”.

Further, Schmidt et al. (2008) compared the effectiveness of the websites of small and medium-sized Spanish and Brazilian hotels based on the following factors: the existence of price segmentation (price), information on hotel services (product), multimedia availability such as videos of the hotel and its surroundings (multimedia), ease of navigating the website (navigability), the probability of reservation online (reservation system) and the presence of elements for retaining existing customers (customer retention).

Also, Shuai and Wu (2011) evaluated 48 websites of international tourist hotels in Taiwan based on information, communication and executing transactions. The findings show that hotels use their websites for providing information and for transactions, but not for interacting with customers. Given the findings attained, they suggest that hotel managers must have a “more interactive presence” on their websites using the interactive tools available on the Internet.

According to PhoCusWright (2012) about 52.3% of all reservations were made online in 2010. On the other hand, the rating of online sales has diminished by 4.7% compared with the previous year.

This suggests that hotels need to invest further to improve the quality of their websites to attract new customers and increase online sales. Herrero and San Martin (2012) indicated that given the level of competition in the industry, hotels aim to design their websites to be a marketing tool and use this in an attempt to influence the decision-making of their customers.

Recently, Salavati and Hashim (2015) evaluated the content analysis of each hotel website. They noticed that existing hotels use website predominantly to present their business. Electronic commerce activities are negligible among Iranian hotels; moreover, none of the Iranian hotels in this study offered online reservations, and only half of the 75 evaluated websites offer a multilingual option. Also, the structure of websites that offer information in other languages, such as English and Arabic, can aid customers who are unaware with Iran find required information. Table 1 shows the recent studies that examine website dimensions.

Table 1. Previous studies of hotel website evaluation

Previous studies that examine hotel website dimensions	Authors
An updated comprehensive review of website evaluation studies in hospitality and tourism	Sun et al. (2017)
An empirical study on the influence of economy hotel website quality on online booking intentions	Li et al. (2017)
A Modified Model for Hotel Website Functionality Evaluation	Leung et al. (2016)
conceptual model of interactive hotel website: The role of perceived website interactivity and customer perceived value toward website revisit intention	Abdullah et al. (2016)
Present and future hotel website marketing activities: Change propensity analysis	Li et al. (2015)
Impact of hotel website quality on online booking intentions: eTrust as a mediator	Wang et al. (2015)
A hybrid multi-criteria decision making model to evaluate hotel websites	Akincilar & Dagdeviren (2014)
Framework for the characterization of hotel websites	Correia et al. (2014)
Website evaluation of the top 100 hotels using advanced content analysis and eMICA model	Ting et al. (2013)

2.3 Hotel website evaluation in Egypt and Croatia

Research results by Panian and Jakovic (2006) displayed that hotel websites in Croatia have main problems in attracting customers. The outcomes of this study also presented the quality of the hotel Website was not related to hotel classification. The analysis should be repeated from time to time to observe how hotel websites remain to compare to others. Furthermore, hotel managers should always classify other durable hotel websites and tourist websites whose ideas and practices could be adopted to develop their hotel website even further. The utmost substantial feature of the website value was its maintenance, as this frequently permits contact for novel information and new contents for the website customers.

Recently, Jakovic and Galetic (2014) conducted a research and they evaluated the Croatian five-star hotel websites in order to create the magnitude to which electronic business is functional in this segment of Croatian tourism. The utmost shortage is the lack of usage for mobile applications, as 20% of five-star hotel websites in Croatia only have their own mobile application, which could help customers to directly get if there are vacancies and where they can pay for their accommodation directly. Unexpectedly, 80% of the Croatian five-star hotels websites use Facebook profile for additional promotion. Moreover, 70% of the Croatian five-star hotel websites use twitter, an online social networking service and micro blogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters.

More significantly, to our knowledge, the existing hospitality literature has no published articles that examined the issue of hotel website dimensions and attributes from the perspective of hoteliers in Egypt for Five-star hotels, either chain or independent hotels. While recent studies by Salem and Cavlek (2016) examined hotel website features in Egypt by conducting a content analysis and it examines customers' viewpoints about the importance of the contents of hotel websites. The study involved a quantitative method of measurement and evaluation of the information provided by hotel websites. It tried to evaluate the richness of definite and ample information dimensions, which as a whole constitutes the information services offered through the website.

Based on the above, this study has developed a conceptual framework that includes the following main research variables: Hotel website features, chain hotels, and independent hotels (see [figure 1](#)).

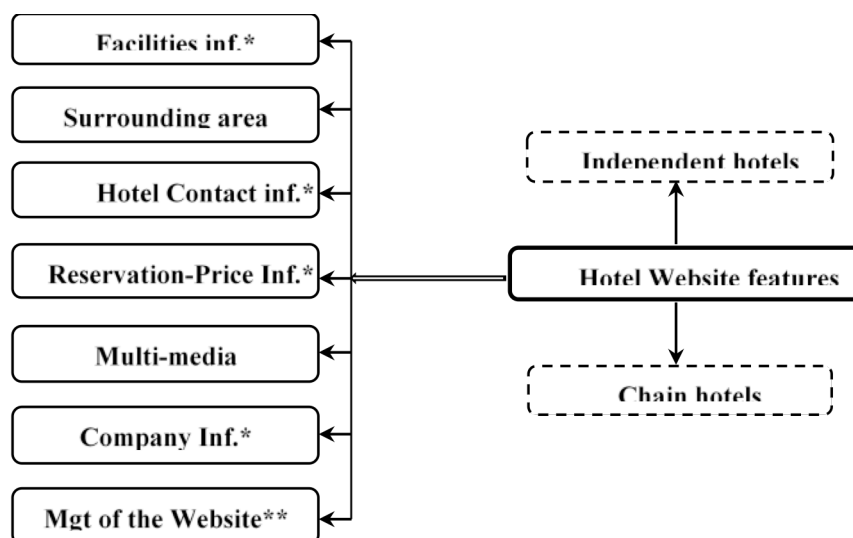


Figure 1. Conceptual framework:

*= Information **= Management

3.1 Population frame

This study of evaluating hotel website based on *exploring* the contents of the hotel website which they already exist. Egypt and Croatia are selected as this study is original in this geographic context.

It fills the gap between two Mediterranean countries. Moreover, It clarifies if there are differences between hotels in both countries. More specifically, comparing chain vs. independent hotels adds a critical point in this study. As hotel chain, has standardised operating systems, centralised reservation systems, unity in IT for all their hotels. While, this study explores the independent hotels with their procedures to cope with other chain hotels. A researcher counts the number of features present in website by using a standardized checklist. The foremost benefits of this technique are its simplicity in collecting data and diminishing error, and the affluence of analysis. With reference to statistics from the Ministry of Tourism (2016), Egypt, there are 156 five-star hotels in Egypt. Besides, according to statistics from the Ministry of Tourism (2016), Croatia, there are 31 five-star hotels in Croatia. Consequently, the population frame for this study is the list of all five-star hotels in Egypt (113 chain hotels and 43 independent hotels, representing 156 hotels) and Croatia (19 chain hotels and 12 independent hotels, representing 31 hotels) based on complete census technique to scrutinize the effect of hotel ownership type on hotel website contents from analyzing website contents. In Egypt, number of chain hotels with a website 113 hotels represented 100% of chain hotels. While number of independent hotels with a website 34 hotels represented 79% of independent hotels and the others may be under installation. In Croatia, all five star hotels either independent or chain hotels have a website. Table 2 shows the number of five-star hotels and number of hotels with a website in Egypt and Croatia. The researcher browsed each hotel's website, both chain and independent hotel, to evaluate the website contents by using the hotel evaluation survey. Website evaluation uses inspective procedures and research to thoroughly determine the value of a web-based information system on a reliable base. Hotel website evaluation plays a substantial role in testing website services and activities, structural planning, and in familiarizing objectives and goals. This technique of 'formative' evaluation, where the goals and customer needs correlate with the evaluating process, differences with a 'summative' procedure of evaluation through which the degree to which the website is meeting set goals and customer needs is identified (Thompson, McClure and Jaeger, 2003).

Table 2. No. of Five-star hotels and no. of hotels with a website in Egypt and Croatia

Country No.	Egypt →		website		Croatia →		website	
	No. of Hotels	%	No.	%	No. of Hotels	%	No.	%
Chain hotels	113	72	113	100	19	61	19	100
Independent hotels	43	28	34	79	12	39	12	100
Total	156	100	147	90	31	100	31	100

3.2 Measures and questionnaire development

Based on the earlier studies, there are a little of standardized rules or characteristics that cover the real existence of the hotel website content. Thus, the hotel website evaluation form is modified from the standardized website evaluation form developed by prior studies (Law and Chung, 2003; Morrison et al., 2004; Weeks and Crouch, 1999). More precisely, the hotel website evaluation survey was developed by Zafiropoulos et al. (2005). In the current study, the form was modified to explore the existence of the hotel website content. The hotel website evaluation survey is categorized into seven dimensions (Hotel contact information, Surrounding area information, Facilities information, Reservation-price information, Management of the website in terms of maintenance and administration, and web site design, multi-media and finally, Company information) (Law and Chung, 2003; Morrison et al., 2004; Weeks and Crouch, 1999; Zafiropoulos et al., 2004; Zafiropoulos et al., 2005). Table 3 displays the measures used in the study.

Table 3. Measures of the study

Construct	Authors	Examples of measurement items
Facilities information	Chung and Law, 2003; Law and Chung, 2003; Morrison et al., 2004; Weeks and Crouch, 1999; Zafiropoulos et al., 2004; Zafiropoulos et al., 2005.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General description for the site • Description of facilities
Hotel contact information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address • Feedback form
Reservation-price information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of booking online • Availability of special offers
Surrounding area information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area short description • Availability of map
Management of the website		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of sign in • The website provides Multilanguage
Company information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about us \ brand • Availability of hotel policy
Multi-media		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire • Newsletter

3.3 Reliability and validity analysis

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to examine the reliability. For the entire questionnaire, the alpha value of overall attributes was 0.846. According to Sekaran (2003) and Spector (1992), an appropriate level of internal consistency reliability is greater than 0.7. Cronbach's alpha values for the individual constructs indicated a satisfactory level as all seven variables Tabled were well above the expected level of 0.70 (see Table 4).

To attain validity, a number of procedures have been tracked. Such procedures, as suggested by Remenyi et al. (1998), include (a) reviewing a large body of literature to carefully identify concepts, ideas, relationships, and issues under study; (b) developing the questionnaire from existing related studies; and (c) pre-testing the questionnaire formally with executive and academic experts to evaluate whether individual items appear to be appropriate measures of their respective constructs.

All suggestions and clarifications concerning construction, phrasing, and questions were considered in the final draft of the questionnaire.

Table 4. Reliability analysis.

Attributes	Number of Cronbach's items	Alpha
Facilities_info	9	.811
Hotel_contact_info	7	.825
Reservation_price_info	9	.843
Surrounding_area_info	8	.826
Company_info	3	.827
Multi-media	7	.809
Management_of_website	9	.829
Overall attributes	51	.846

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Dimensions of Hotel website evaluation

Table five clarifies the analysis of hotel website content in 5-star hotels in both Egypt and Croatia. This study involves a quantitative method of measurement and evaluation of the richness of the information provided by hotel websites. By using a large checklist, when the hotel website provides all information, this means a hotel website with the richest information offered. Moreover, these information services were classified into seven dimensions which are clarified in the same exhibit.

As for *facilities information* dimensions, it appears that all five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt and Croatia has a general description for the site. All five-star chain hotel websites in Croatia has a description from room facilities, description of dining rooms, and description for bars. More than 90% of five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt has a description of the facilities, description of room facilities, and a description of entertainments activates. It appears that more than 94% of five-star chain hotel websites in Croatia described conference halls. While five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt represented 53%. Less than 30% of five-star chain hotel websites in Croatia has a description of reception facilities, shops, and gifts, while in Egypt, they represented more than 55%. On the other hand, it appears that all five-star independent hotel websites in Egypt and Croatia represented reasonable scores in facilitates information dimension. While, less than 40% of them have a description of reception facilities, shops, and gifts.

Regarding *surrounding area information*, it looks that all five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt published short area description, while the same types of hotels in Croatia represented 84%. More than 90% of chain hotel websites in Egypt publish the availability of maps and description of the distances. Even though the same type of hotel websites in Croatia represented less than 70%. Description for the shops in the area represented 35.4% in five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt, but it represented 5.3% in the same types of hotels in Croatia. For independent hotels, more than 90% in Croatia has availability of maps, while less than 70% in Egypt have. It is surprising, 21.1%

of chain hotels in Croatia published weather information, while more than 60% of independent hotels in Croatia published.

Concerning *current hotel contact*, it appears that all five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt have address and telephone information. In Croatia, all five-star chain hotel websites have Address, telephone, fax, e-mail, and complaint form. On the other hand, it appears that more than 60% of five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt have feedback form and frequently asked questions (FAQs), while in Croatia represented 10.5%. As for independent hotels, all five-star hotel websites in Croatia have Address, telephone, e-mail, complaint form, and feedback form. While in Egypt, complaint form, feedback form, and FAQs represented 5.9%, 35.3%, and 20.6% respectively. Surprisingly, it appears that 10.5% of chain hotels in Croatia have complaint form, while independent hotels have 100%.

With reference to *reservation-price information*, it appears all five-star chain hotel websites in Egypt and Croatia have online booking. All five-star hotel chain websites in Croatia provides information about rates and payment for travel agencies, while in Egypt, they provide 61.1%. On the other hand, independent hotels in Croatia and Egypt published 8.3% and 17.6% of information about rates and payment for travel agencies correspondingly.

In relation to *multi-media*, all five-star chain hotel websites in both Egypt and Croatia have Facebook. While Facebook in independent hotel websites in both Egypt and Croatia represented 52.6%, and 57% correspondingly. Besides, all five-star hotel chain websites in Croatia have questionnaire form, but in Egypt 23.9% have questionnaire form. On the other hand, 14.7% and 16.7% of independent hotel websites in Egypt and Croatia have a questionnaire form respectively. In Croatia, it appeared that 75% of independent hotel websites, published a newsletter, while chain websites published with 52.6%. Moreover, 58.3% of independent hotel websites in Croatia published announcements, whereas chain websites published only 10.5%.

Regarding *company information*, more than 85% of five-star chain hotels in both Egypt and Croatia have information about the company and brand. Moreover, information about the company and brand is higher in chain hotels than independent hotels in both Egypt and Croatia. It is noticed that all independent hotels in Croatia has availability of hotel policy, while chain hotels represented 15.8%. On the other hand, chain hotels in Egypt represented 63.7% higher than independent hotels (44.1%).

With reference to the *management of the website*, all five-star chain hotels in Egypt and Croatia have a photo album on their website. Moreover, more than 90% of independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia have also a photo album on their website. On the other hand, all chain and independent hotels in Croatia provide Multilanguage. While in Egypt, chain hotels and independent hotel represented 80.5% and 41.2% respectively. All five-star chain and independent hotel websites in Egypt and Croatia have the availability of help.

By comparing earlier findings, with Salavati and Hashim (2015) study, they examined the content analysis of each hotel website. They found that existing hotels use website primarily to introduce their business. E-commerce activities are minimal among Iranian hotels; in fact, none of the hotels in this study provided online reservations, and only half of the 75 evaluated websites provide a multilingual option. The construction of websites that provide information in other languages, such as English and Arabic, can help tourists who are unfamiliar with Iran find required information.

From a management perspective, Díaz and Koutrab (2013) have identified the major groups of hotel chains in relation to a number of indicators measuring website persuasiveness. The results demonstrated that the content of hotel chain websites is different in relation to hotel category, so investment strategies should also be different.

Moreover, from a survey of 249 leisure travelers, Toh et al. (2011) found that 80 percent of the travelers searched for hotel information using web tools, with more than half, making their bookings through hotels' host websites or third-party websites (i.e., online travel agencies). Thus, the findings of studies on customer behavior propose the important role of the online channel as it plays a crucial role in the hospitality industry. Moreover, the findings of this study go in line with the results of Ettestad (2008) study in which he clarified that many hotels have an account on social networking sites like Facebook.com to help increase their web presence and establish high value links back to their home page. It is noted that most of the hotels in the current study has Facebook as a social media to communicate effectively with the customers. Facebook has become a critical tool for each hotel to publish products, services, amenities, promotions... etc.

Other more marginal information can improve a site by including value-added features such as updated exchange rates, destination links and animation. In particular, attention should be given to online guest comments or survey forms, and adapting marketing mix variables of the website regardless of the hotel type. The use of visual features such as photographs (Lee and Gretzel, 2011) or video clips and YouTube (Kim and Mattila, 2011) is relevant customer evaluation. Positive experiences with online services are likely to improve the hotel's customer base, and should therefore influence positively on the company's final performance (Sullivan and Walstrom, 2001). All these studies go well in line with the current study as it explored that most of the hotels has lack of animation, YouTube, feedback form, and currency converter.

4.2 Ranking and significance of hotel website dimensions

Table six clarifies ranking and significance of hotel website dimensions in five-star chain and independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia. It is noted that **facilities information** ranked the first dimension in chain hotels in Egypt (79%) and Croatia (78%). This may due to those hoteliers preferred to show all hotel services and facilities to their potential customers. On the other hand, **multi-media** ranked the last dimension in chain hotels in Egypt (45%) and Croatia (40). This may due to some hoteliers ignored the importance questionnaire, awards, press, and announcements. Of course, loyalty programs play a vibrant role in attracting and transforming potential customers into actual customers. Moreover, the opinions of customers are critical importance to any hospitality industry as any hotel established mainly to serve customer only. There is a significant variance regarding surrounding area information, hotel contact information, and management of the website dimensions in five-star chain hotels in Egypt and Croatia ($p < 0.00$). This finding answered **the first question**, as it appeared there are differences regarding hotel website contents in chain hotels between Egypt and Croatia. The study results show that the contents of five-star chain hotels in Egypt significantly varies from five-star chain hotels in Croatia ($p < 0.00$). It appeared that the overall evaluation of hotel website contents in five-star chain hotels in Egypt (70.2%) is higher than in Croatia (56%). Even though there is a significant variance and the overall evaluation of hotel website contents in five-star chain hotels in Egypt are higher than in Croatia.

Table 5. Dimensions of Hotel website evaluation, n= 147, 5-star hotels in Egypt and 31, 5-star hotels in Croatia
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Country Dimensions	Egypt				Croatia			
	Ch. (113)		Ind. (34)		Ch. (19)		Ind. (12)	
	No.	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Facilities information		79		72.2		78		75
1. Is there a general description for the site?	113	100	31	91.2	19	100	11	91.7
2. Description of facilities	105	92.9	33	97.1	16	84.2	11	91.7
3. Description for room facilities	106	93.1	30	88.2	19	100	10	83.3
4. Description for different activities\entertainment.	109	96.5	33	97.1	16	84.2	11	91.7
5. Description for dining room(s)	90	79.6	28	82.4	19	100	12	100
6. Description for bars	87	77	23	67.6	19	100	11	91.7
7. Description for conference halls	60	53.1	19	55.9	18	94.7	8	66.7
8. Description for reception facilities	70	61.9	12	35.3	5	26.3	4	33.3
9. Description for shops/ Gifts	64	56.6	12	35.3	4	21.1	3	25
surrounding area information		72.2		53.7		51		55
1. Area short description	113	100	30	88.2	16	84.2	9	75
2. Availability of map	105	92.9	23	67.6	13	68.4	11	91.7
3. Description for distances	105	92.9	27	79.4	13	68.4	6	50
4. Description for area interests	85	75.2	16	47.1	15	75.7	7	58.3
5. Description for ways of transportation	75	66.4	12	35.3	14	73.7	4	33.3
6. Availability of weather information	52	46	12	35.3	4	21.1	8	66.7
7. Description for different dining facilities in area	78	69	17	50	1	5.3	3	25
8. Description for shops in area	40	35.4	9	26.5	1	5.3	5	41.7
Hotel Contact Information		77		56.		60		57

					3				
1.	Address	113	10	33	97.1	19	100	12	100
2.	Availability of telephone information	113	10	27	79.4	19	100	12	100
3.	Availability of fax information	84	74.3	25	73.5	19	100	11	91.7
4.	Availability of E-Mail address	91	80.5	28	82.4	19	100	12	100
5.	Complaint form	65	57.5	2	5.9	19	100	12	100
6.	Feedback form	69	61.1	12	35.3	2	10.5	12	100
7.	Frequently Asked Questions (F.A.Q)	74	65.5	7	20.6	2	10.5	1	8.3
Reservation-Price Information			70.1		50.3	63		59	
1.	Availability of prices / Rates	90	79.6	17	50	18	94.7	11	91.7
2.	On-line availability	93	82.3	25	73.5	15	78.9	11	91.7
3.	Availability of booking on line	113	10	28	82.4	19	100	11	91.7
4.	Availability of packages / Promotion	89	78.8	20	58.8	13	68.4	8	66.7
5.	Availability of special offers	90	79.6	17	50	8	42.1	5	41.7
6.	Info. about types of cards accepted	66	58.4	15	44.1	18	94.7	10	83.3
7.	Info. about rates & payment for travel agencies	69	61.1	6	17.6	19	100	1	8.3
8.	Availability of currency converter	48	42.5	14	41.2	15	78.9	5	41.7
9.	Availability of group promotions / members special	58	51.3	12	35.3	2	10.5	2	16.7
Multi-media			45.5		33.2	40		51	
1.	Newsletter	60	53.1	16	47.1	10	52.6	9	75
2.	Announcements	57	50.4	14	41.2	2	10.5	7	58.3
3.	Awards	43	38.1	14	41.2	12	63.2	7	58.3
4.	Press	40	35.	5	14.	11	57.9	4	33.3

5.		4	7						
5.	Questionnaire	27	23.9	5	14.7	19	100	2	16.7
6.	Recommendations	77	68.1	12	35.3	11	57.9	8	66.7
7.	Social media (Facebook)	113	100	17	50	19	100	9	75
Company Information		72.3		46			54		42
1.	Info. about us \ brand	97	85.8	22	64.7	17	89.5	10	83.3
2.	Info. about employment \ careers	48	42.5	10	29.4	11	57.9	5	41.7
3.	Availability of hotel policy	72	63.7	15	44.1	3	15.8	12	100
Management of the Website		75.3		46			45		50
1.	Is there a photo album \ photos?	113	100	33	97.1	19	100	11	91.7
2.	Does the website provide Multilanguage?	91	80.5	14	41.2	19	100	12	100
3.	Is there a photo video \ virtual tour?	56	49.6	19	55.9	8	42.1	9	75
4.	Availability of sign in	61	54	18	52.9	8	42.1	4	33.3
5.	Possibility of downloading	48	42.5	12	35.3	12	63.2	6	50
6.	Availability of terms of use	98	86.7	13	38.2	5	26.3	4	33.3
7.	Search engines/ Links	77	68.1	17	50	6	31.6	5	41.7
8.	Availability of Help	113	100	12	35.3	19	100	2	16.7

However, the difference is little bit and this may be due to the number of chain hotels in Egypt is more than Croatia. This also due to chain hotels in Egypt concerned more with reception facilities, weather information, availability of map, description of distances, description of different dining areas, feedback form, FAQs, special offers and group promotions, availability of hotel policy, and search engines than Chain hotel in Croatia. However, the number of internet users in Egypt vs Croatia have not played a vital role in the difference as most people became using internet globally.

As for independent hotels, it is noted that *facilities information* also ranked the first dimension in independent hotels in Egypt (72%) and Croatia (75%). On the other hand, *multi-media* ranked the

last dimension in independent hotels in Egypt (32%) but **company information** in Croatia (42%). There is a significant variance concerning **multi-media** dimension in five-star independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia ($p < 0.00$). The Table shows that the contents of five-star independent hotels in Egypt do not significantly vary from five-star independent hotels in Croatia ($p > 0.05$). While the overall evaluation of hotel website contents in five-star independent hotels in Egypt (51.1%) is lower than in Croatia (56%). This finding answered **the second question**, as it appeared there are differences regarding hotel website contents in independent hotels between Egypt and Croatia. This due to independent hotels in Croatia concerned more with weather information, complaint form, feedback, Facebook, recommendation, and Multilanguage's than independent hotels in Egypt.

This finding is similar to Zafiropoulos et al. (2006) study, which concluded that the richest dimensions are 'facilities information' and 'hotel contact information' because they both reach 60% of the full capability to offer information services. However, they also recorded the uppermost values of importance rates regarding to managers' rating. In contrast, multi-media dimension considered as the least occurrence information dimension (17.08%) to make online business.

Moreover, this study's findings go in line with a study conducted by Law and Chung (2003); they clarified that facilities information and reservation information as the most and second most important dimension. Also, Avcikurt et al. (2010) showed that hotel contact information is the most used dimension in thermal hotel websites. Surrounding area information (53.8%) is the second, hotel facilities information (49.8%) is the third and reservation information (38.9%) is the fourth most used dimension in thermal hotels. The website management dimension (29.3%) is the least used dimension in thermal hotels. On the other hand, Law and Hsu (2005) stated that reservation information and facilities information are the most important dimensions that the customers expect from a hotel website.

Table 6. Evaluating, ranking, and significance of hotel website dimensions

Website dimensions	Chain hotels					Independent hotels				
	Egypt %	R.	Croatia %	R.	Sig.	Egypt %	R.	Croatia %	R.	Sig.
Reservation-Price Information	70	5	63	2	.22	51	4	59	2	.27
surrounding area information	71	4	51	5	.00**	54	3	55	4	.60
Hotel Contact Information	76	2	60	3	.00**	56	2	57	3	.87
Facilities information	79	1	78	1	.80	72	1	75	1	.60
Management of the Website	72	3	45	6	.00**	50	5	50	6	.90
Multi-media	45	7	40	7	.52	32	7	51	5	.04**
Company Information	64	6	54	4	.18	46	6	42	7	.68
Overall	70.2				.00**	51.1		56		.38
	56									

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). M. = Mean, R. = Rank, Sig= Significant

4.3 Website dimensions' evaluation: chain vs. independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia

It is shown in Table seven that the website dimensions' evaluation: chain vs. independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia. **In Egypt**, the content of chain five-star hotel website (70%) is higher than independent five-star hotels (51%). The study results show that the contents of five-star chain hotel websites significantly varies from independent hotels ($p < 0.00$). Moreover, there is a significant variance in all dimensions of the hotel website evaluations ($p < 0.00$) except facilities information ($p > 0.05$). This finding answered the **third question** that indicated that chain hotels have more contents on their websites than independent hotel websites in Egypt. This finding indicated that half of five-star independent hotels in Egypt have a lack of information in their websites which due to lack of; description for reception facilities, description for shops/ Gifts, description for area interests, description for ways of transportation, complaint form, feedback form, FAQs, availability of prices, availability of special offers, information about rates & payment for travel agencies, social media, availability of hotel policy, availability of Multilanguage, and availability of help. For an international chain, it has one master website that can manage other hotels under the same chain all over the world. In Egypt, the privileges of chain hotels appeared in central reservation system, standardized system, loyalty programs ... etc. Moreover, almost five-star chain hotels have the organizational structure capability for facilitating the flow of knowledge, which is shaped by an organization's policies, processes, and system of rewards and incentives, which determine the channels from which knowledge is accessed and how it flows (Salem, 2014).

This finding was in line with the results of (O'Connor, 2003) study, in which he stated that major international hotel chains' electronics-distribution activities are indicative of industry patterns, as other study has shown that big companies are most active on the web-perhaps because their size often gives them an advantage in terms of technical expertise and financial resources. Moreover, one of the important results of Zafiroopoulos et al. (2006) is the correlation coefficients among the chain hotels and the seven information dimensions. Chain membership is also significantly correlated with every one of them.

Besides, the findings of this study were also in line with the results of Yeung and Law (2004) study, they suggested the usability of the hotel websites as a website evaluation criterion. A modified heuristic model was developed to compare and contrast the usability performance between chain and independent hotel websites. Experimental results indicated that the website usability performance of chain hotels was significantly better than independent counterparts.

Moreover, Scaglione et al. (2005) found larger, chain and luxury hotels adopted the domain name earlier than their smaller, budget and independent competitors. Similar findings were also identified in Siguaw et al.'s (2000) study. Drawing on the results from these studies, hotel with brand membership is possible to directly affect a hotel's preference towards IT adoption and chain hotels generally have a longer history of technology adoption than independent hotels.

This study is also in the line with a study carried out in Hong Kong by Law et al. (2011); the results of this study have contributed to better understanding the use of hotel website applications in the hospitality industry. Focused mainly on a content analysis of 109 hotel websites in Hong Kong, a trend of increasing adoption of hotel website was identified among the hotels in Hong Kong. The difference in the adoption rate of hotel websites was found between chain and independent hotels.

In Croatia, it is noted that the content of chain and independent five-star hotel website represented the same proportion (56%). The results also show that the contents of five-star chain hotel websites does not significantly vary from independent hotels ($p>0.05$). Moreover, there is no significant variance in all dimensions of the hotel website evaluations between chain and independent hotels ($p>0.05$). This finding answered the *fourth question*, as it appeared there is no difference between five-star chain hotels and independent hotels in Croatia regarding the contents of the hotel website. It is due to all five-star hotels in Croatia concerned with description for dining room, address, availability of telephone information, availability of E-Mail address, complaint form, availability of prices, availability of booking online, and provide Multilanguage. All hotels either chain or independent concerned with all facilities and services to be published on their website.

Table 7. Website dimensions evaluation: chain vs. independent hotels in Egypt and Croatia)

Website dimensions	Chain (Egypt)		Indp. (Egypt)		P. Value	Chain (Croatia)		Indp.(Croati a)		P. Value
	Mea n	S. D	Mea n	S.D		Mean	S.D	Mea n	S. D	
Facilities information	.79	.2	.72	.1	.14 (.08)	.78	0.1	.75	.2	.104 (.58)
Hotel Contact Info.	.76	.2	.56	.2	.38** (.00)	.60	0.1	.57	.1	.209 (.26)
Reservation-Price Info.	.70	.2	.51	.2	.34** (.00)	.63	0.2	.59	.2	.103 (.58)
Surrounding area info.	.71	.2	.54	.2	.39** (.00)	.51	0.2	.55	.3	.091 (.60)
Company Info.	.64	.3	.46	.3	.24** (.01)	.54	0.3	.42	.3	.233 (.21)
Multi-media	.45	.3	.32	.3	.18* (.02)	.40	0.2	.51	.3	.243 (.20)
Management of the Website	.72	.2	.50	.2	.46** (.00)	.45	0.1	.50	.3	.153 (.41)
Overall website evaluation	.70	.2	.51	.2	.43** (.00)	.56	0.1	.56	.1	.005 (.99)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). S.D= Standard deviation

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, conversely, the Internet is accessible to most everyone as it became one of the priorities and anyone can search for any hotel or tourism destination on their own. Potential customers are able to take a look at hotel websites, as these websites are vibrant advertising and promotional networks. Therefore, the more gorgeous and valuable a hotel website is, the more possibility to turn a potential customer into actual customers. The findings of this study display that the contents of five-star chain hotels in Egypt significantly vary from five-star chain hotels in Croatia. It appeared that the overall evaluation of hotel website contents in five-star chain hotels in Egypt (70.2%) is higher than in Croatia (56%). Besides, the contents of five-star independent hotels in Egypt do not

significantly vary from five-star independent hotels in Croatia. While the overall evaluation of hotel website contents in five-star independent hotels in Egypt (51.1%) is lower than in Croatia (56%). The content of chain five-star hotel website (70%) is higher than independent five-star hotels (51%) in Egypt. The study results show that the contents of five-star chain hotel websites significantly vary from independent hotels. Furthermore, there is a significant variance in all dimensions of the hotel website evaluations except facilities information. On the other hand, it is noted that the content of chain and independent five-star hotel website represented the same proportion (56%) in Croatia. The results also show that the contents of five-star chain hotel websites do not significantly vary from independent hotels. Moreover, there is no significant variance in all dimensions of the hotel website evaluations between chain and independent hotels.

A decent web design is a hotel's first impression to the user. That is a vital part of the dilemma, nevertheless not the extreme significant. Concentrated on the purpose of the hotel website (sales and publishing information) may be the content that is more vital, or the site usability that is more imperative. The results of this current study are useful and beneficial to hotel practitioners and academic researchers in terms of being able to better understand the current situation of Egyptian and Croatian hotel websites. Regarding *theoretical* implications, the nature of this study can be considered as a distinctive research in the field of E-Marketing commonly and E-Marketing in chain and independent hotels in both Egypt and Croatia precisely. This is a comparative study which has made a considerable contribution to all different categories and types of hospitality field at a wider broad. The most important implication of the current study is to develop and update theoretical part continually as the event changes in a dramatic way. *Practically*, the checklist of the hotel website content by adding new features to the dimensions like social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Trip advisor, YouTube... etc.) and mobile applications should be precisely considered into account which it was noted that some of the hotel websites had other contents rather than the checklist. Therefore, it is crucial to develop, test, and validate this evaluation framework to be coping with the latest innovations. It is essentially more significant for hotels to reform their website to stay up-to-date with the recent trends in hotel website design.

As for independent hotels in Egypt, hoteliers should care about the weak points in their hotel websites and revise the content of the website continually specifically; *description for reception facilities, description for shops/ Gifts, description for area interests, description for ways of transportation, complaint form, feedback form, FAQs, availability of prices, availability of special offers, information about rates & payment for travel agencies, social media, availability of hotel policy, availability of Multilanguage, and availability of help*. In spite of chain hotels is better than independent hotels in Egypt regarding the contents of the website, but these chains should into consideration their website in terms of; *availability of weather information, description for shops in area, availability of currency converter, awards, press, questionnaire, information about employment, availability of photo video \ virtual tour, and possibility of downloading*

As for independent hotels in Croatia, hoteliers should pay attention to the weak points in their websites like; *description for reception facilities, description for shops, description for ways of transportation, description for different dining facilities in area, description for shops in area, frequently asked questions , availability of special offers, information about rates & payment for travel agencies, availability of currency converter, availability of group promotions , press,*

questionnaire, information about employment, search engines/ Links, and availability of help. In addition, chain hotels in Croatia should pay attention to many of their website contents as; description for reception facilities, description for shops/ gifts, availability of weather information, description for different dining facilities in area, description for shops in area, feedback form, frequently asked questions, availability of group promotions, announcements, availability of hotel policy, availability of a photo video \ virtual tour, and Search engines/ Links.

In general, there are many recommendations which will be fruitful for all hotels; it is imperative to click on a competitor's website, browse, and then repeat this practice continually. Moreover, Platforms such as Instagram, and YouTube have increased rapidly in popularity, demonstrating customers' need for a more visual website. For tourists, this facilitates to share and discover information about hotels, destinations, and travel experiences. Furthermore, hoteliers should highlight their guests' reviews directly on the hotel website, this is why online review sites such as Trip Advisor, Guest Review, and Yelp are so popular amongst tourists who searching for hotels online. These online reviews facilitate for tourists to get numerous, latest, and balanced information about a hotel directly from the perspective of tourists just like them.

Likewise, tablet or smartphone offers a good opportunity to search at any place and at any time. This is why it's vital for hotels to have a website that's designed to work through different devices and offer a great experience for desktop, tablet, and smartphone customers. In recent times, with the fabulous growth of demands of mobile phones/devices, swift expansion of wireless Internet, and GPS, hoteliers have started turning to Mobile Hotel Reservation to transport fresh services to existing customers and attract potential ones (Wang and Wang, 2010). Hotel Website and mobile applications will not be only a promotion channel, but also a vigorous generator of the hotel business and growth. All hotels, especially with higher categorization, have to adopt the new technologies, because any potential customer could use new technologies to find more information about the hotel. Only 20.00% of the Croatian five-star hotels have their own mobile application which clients could use directly on their mobile phones and make reservations more easily and comfortably (Jakovic and Galetic, 2014).

6. LIMITATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study had several limitations. Initially, hotel websites are living, vibrant targets of study that in some cases develop rather rapidly. As a result, the findings may soon become dated; in other words, the data attained on a particular date may rapidly miss its validity. Accordingly, it would be appropriate to regularly monitor the chosen sample. Therefore, future research should take into account of the ongoing changes and updating of websites is one of the major challenges in website content analysis.

Secondly, the data for this investigation came from five-star hotels in Egypt and Croatia only; therefore, it is difficult to generalize these findings to other categories of hotels. More research is needed to evaluate hotel website content analysis in other categories of hotels as well as other types of service contexts such as restaurants and motels.

Thirdly, this study is mainly focused on hotel website content analysis. A natural extension of this research would thus be comparing these results with the importance of the hotel website dimensions from the customers' perspectives.

Further research may be extended to examine how website persuasiveness influences customer behavior or organizational performance. Finally, an extensive research should emphasize on the scrutiny of different variables that moderate the relationship between website features and customer behavior. Customer characteristics such as demographics and personality traits could act as moderators.

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How the practice of Emotional Intelligence enhances positively, delivering high-quality standards in Food Services at all stages

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ABSTRACT

As competition in Tourism market increasing rapidly, the need for qualitative services become a reality . Tourists and travelers in general , are more experienced , and demanding . Quality in every part of the service operation is a fact . Sciences of Total Quality management , or Service marketing giving a lot of information about how can make a well organized operation . Besides these , an important issue is the method of Emotional Intelligence . How people in the certain industry reacts using the proper behavior controlling emotions without causing pressure first to themselves, and then to the others. It is an every day effort for any individual . A very useful practice which build good reaction and communication with other people. That works wisely in Tourism market , where are a lot of different nationalities , who need to communicate properly .

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, wrote in “Ethica Nikomachea” : Everyone can get angry, it's easy. But getting angry with the right person, to the right degree, for the right reason at the right time and in the right way, this is not easy at all .

This philosophy, has been the basis for practicing the technique of emotional intelligence in human resource management.

.Working with a team, in food and beverage industry, takes a lot of effort and positive energy . Dealing every day with different personalities who carrying a variety of ethics , culture, education, character, needs to build up certain communication skills, in order to proceed this professional attitude should work a lot on personal Emotional Intelligence .

Key words: Intelligence, empathy, service, qualitative

Introduction

Within a continuously changing work environment which imposes socio-economic changes, demands for quality services are increasing. Its work and organization, as well as experience as it is, are issues to be investigated so that the work environment can function properly depending on the location and the sector. The service sector and, in particular, tourism services are more vulnerable to change. It is important the identification of the human-central element. As a social science, tourism has a different approach and parameters to be studied in order to produce a result that will contribute to quality upgrade.

1. The definition of quality

Quality is understood as the customer's perception, which is created after the provided service. Counting Customer Satisfaction, a food company can assess its development, possibly. In new services, in order to keep the customer happy, in case it has not been able to provide it to him so far. Satisfaction can be determined: by events occurring during consumption, and by the final achievement that results from the customer's overall experience.

1.1 Quality Measurement Models

- SERVQUAL: (the quality as perceived by the customer)
- SERVPERF: (the quality as perceived by the customer after using the service)
- INDESERV: (it finds application in industrial services, which are difficult to evaluate)

There is a gap that creates problems for the customers, as far as concerns promised firm services never dealt with. There are not many times where a service provider promises consumer services, which he can not actually observe. (Gounaris, 2003: 88)

The concept of an internal client as it is formed through its environment internal marketing, gives a different dimension to the provision of services by personal contact. A balanced inner state is always transferred to the final recipient, which is the customer.

1.2 The concept of service

Serving means helping / providing service. This is the feeling that emerges from the way to meet the needs of the customers used by professionals of the industry. The identifying information is as follows:

- Material supply services (serving)
- Interaction of employees and clients (courtesy, willingness, good position, human approach)
- Hygiene and appearance of employees/ers

- The quality of the serving.

The elements just mentioned occur service as a practice. There is also another definition of service which has to do with the general experience of enjoying vacations or staying in a hotel. Also has to

do a lot with the managers who operates these vacancies. One of their managerial aim is to coordinate the personel in a way that they collaborate and communicate in a balanced and professional way.

Quality service is characterized by speed and accuracy in response, characteristics that require fast working people, with good knowledge in art restaurant and with good memory.

The delay between dishes (eg between the first and second dishes) creates a sense of frustration to customers, which would stop their meal or continue in bad mood. The search for a waiter as well, is another important issue in the process of serving.

- The quality of personel - client interaction.

Willingness, courtesy and good inter-Position of employees in the F & B departments are important elements of a qualitative product.

Beside the professional attitude of the waiters, there is also being created a beginning of their human interaction. Often customers are looking for contact with waiters , asking questions about menu items or the area's attractions, often, even ask about personal data such as origin and family. They describe their experiences or even their own professional,Family or psychological condition. All this proves the necessity of human communication and approach in a different way as appropriate. This customer mood contains risk factors, mainly due to misunderstandings. For this reason, employees are obliged to be cautious but not negative about the human part of communicating with the customer. Of course, quality in communication of this type depends on business culture , where its lack is replaced by the employee's culture.

- Hygiene and appearance of waiters.

The cleanliness, and the tidy appearance in food and service industry is critical. Keeping personal Hygiene is mandatory, as well as keeping their outfit in good condition. It is a must to avoid heavy perfumes, as well as to avoid eating foods which contains garlic or onion, before the personnel begin their shift, because the result is unpleasant.

The fabric of the outfit should be made of good quality, in cotton preferably, so that sweat is absorbed.

A basic requirement is personal hygiene on a daily basis, and regular change of work shirt.

Service is a non-material, and non-storable good. This element defines its relativity.

The elements that determine relevancy in the concept of serving in restaurants are the following:

A. The human factor

B. Ethnological and Cultural Differences

- The human factor. Human substance is a complex condition of psycho-mental and intellectual processes. These processes combined with the experiences of each human life, as well as how sees life, has the result of own uniqueness.

- Ethnic and cultural differences. Every nation has its own habits, and behavior codes . They give different interpretations of body language, and communicate with their own way. Quality must be respected in order to provide professional services to these variations, and adopt such behavior. It is difficult for all customers to enjoy good service at the same time.

However, what is important is the effort to maintain a high level of service, which is interrelated with the quality that exists between personal relationships as well. Either way it is not possible to provide quality if it is not part of living and every day behavior.

1.3 Quality service techniques

The basic techniques used to have quality service are:

- The smile and Confidence
- Respect
- To know how to listen
- Commitment
- Good memory

- The smile. At this point, we are particularly privileged since it is in our idiosyncrasy easily smile, and therefore treat our customers with Smile, carrying positive energy and well-being.
- Confidence . When we talk, we need to show the emotion, the confidence that we know very well what we say and what we do, but also that we feel ourselves peaceful and available to offer our services.
- Respect. It is essential partners respectancy. In this way the behavior towards the customer will be proportional. A very good technique is to listen to his words without doubt. The customer needs to complete what he wants to say. By listening to him the personnel can be more effective and persuasive.
- Attentiveness. There is an important theory based on body language of different nations , which define the necessity of avoiding staring at customers eyes while the personnel provides service . According to this theory this would be easily misunderstood. Scientists of human behavior concluded that it is good to focus on the area between the eyes, and over the nose. That gives a neutral look.
- Good memory. When it comes to the customer, it is good to use his name. It makes him feel special and at the same time creates an intimacy that is in personnel discretion to handle it properly, in order to have the desired result. Still is not always useful using names .

Also remembering his preferences in eating and drinking, or even putting him in his preferable sit, is important element which is also under circumstances useful.

2. Requirements for quality service.

Working in Food and Service Industry requires anthropocentric elements who define the qualitative working condition .

These elements are the following:

- Improving communication skills

-- Self knowledge

- "winner" mentality

-- Positive Energy

- Improving communication skills. This can be done through the training of personnel in communication issues and techniques. You need to become a self-assessment, to identify the weaknesses of the individual worker and trying to improve.
- Self knowledge. It is very important for the employee to know the positive and negative points of his character so that he tries to improve himself.
- "Winner" mentality. To believe in himself and not give in to the difficulties.
- Positive Energy. It is important to be optimistic. To focus on the positive side of things, because the positive energy as well as the negative create corresponding feelings which are also transmitted.

A person who collects these elements is able to provide good service

since he will consider this an extension of his everyday life.

Continuous training definitely helps those who are involved in the service sector to improve their technique and make them more effective.

It is a fact , that service field , creates stress and crisis management is an every day issue either for basic line of employees and managers . So stress management is on top of the list , helping communication.

There are people who work much better under pressure, and others who cannot control their impulses and are getting nervous and causing a discomfort situation in job. They have no patience with the colleagues or guests, or even worse if this happens to the manager , will transmit to all the other members of his team negativity and unhappiness. It is finally a way of life being and acting qualitative , with respect and a stable emotional attitude to each difficult situation . In addition is critical for an individual to find out soon what type of personality it has , and make job preference accordingly. An introverted personality is less flexible to communication skills with colleagues and guests. At the contrary extroverted people are flexible , usually good communicators , and curious to learn about other people behavior and habits .

3. The role of Emotional Intelligence in quality service

3.1 Definition of Emotional Intelligence

It is considered to be more important than the IQ , regarding how successful can a professional be in every aspect. The elements that they identify are:

- Self-awareness. The ability of an individual to recognize his feelings as they are . Also the knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the character so can accept constructive criticism. It is through self - awareness that confidence is the certainty of the value and potential of a person
- self-regulation. The way I control and adjust feelings like stress, fear, or anger so that they do not interfere with the prossiding of the duties and generally with everyday behavior of the individual.
- the mobilization, the ability of one to remain optimistic and to continue effort despite any obstacles or difficulties.
- empathy, or in other words the ability to recognize the feelings of the people. They may also have a position that allows them to help develop others by enhancing their abilities and exploit diversity of others recognizing the principles and dynamics of their group. Emotions are often manifested through other signals.

To understand someone's feelings, we need to have the ability to read the non-verbal elements of communication. To interpret the tone of the voice, the gestures, facial expression, and more. Social skills, help to establish and maintain positive relationships. Society skills are for example the ability to influence, effective communication, leadership that inspires, crisis management, effective collaboration and teamwork.

(Goleman, 2011: 23)

Adopting Emotional Intelligence , a manager , or any food service industry employees\ers , helping at first himself and secondly the rest of the organization . It is an everyday effort and takes hard work to achieve, learning how to control feelings , reactions , behavior . And all this without pressing yourself , and turn to a creativity and productive attitude .

3.2 Ways of enhancing emotional intelligence

Enhancing emotional intelligence first comes from cultivating awareness of emotions. It is not useful to criticize or stop the feeling before it started. Non-stress control is another important factor that affects : the person does not think clearly and therefore take wrong decisions. The difficulty approach with humorous mood is another indicator.

According to Professor Mr. Michail Gjadjädmichali, a psychologist at the University of Chicago, "the word" flow "describes the charismatic state in which perfection has come effortlessly. The person's ability to flow is the best moment of emotional mental intelligence.

Streaming probably represents the zenith of manipulation of emotions, subduing in the service of performance and learning. In the flow, feelings are neither contained and channeled.

They are positive, activated and aligned with this particular duty. When you are trapped in the bouts of depression or anxiety, this is blocked. People who are in the flow show a skillful control on what they are doing and their reactions are perfectly in harmony with the alternatives.

There are enough difficulties for food industry employees to provide this flow for different reasons. For many workers whose basic occupation based on survival reasons is difficult to adopt the model, as it has so far been described. This results in several times creating crises during work that are difficult to manage.

Such examples are the solutions to disputes in a negative way as it becomes particularly important, through the lack of emotional intelligence, to perceive those involved.

The proper manager should not get involved with disagreements and not give dimensions to pointless issues.

A proposal that helps and solve the problem is training the team to be cultivate of their intelligence. In this way they will improve communication skills, conduct, command, control and motivation of their associates.

Emotional intelligence gives the greatest results in how to manage customer intercourse. With this better communication between employees is achieved. At this level the team is trained to listen better the needs of its members, better manage stress in general, and balance between personal and professional life without allowing one sector to get involved to the other. (Goleman, 2011: 58)

Mr Albert Buntur, says: "People's beliefs about abilities have a profound effect on these abilities. There is a huge variety in the way you act. People who have the feeling of Self-efficiency are met by failures. They approach things with purpose to confront them, not to worry about what can go wrong. "

Simonov (1970) discusses the relationship of emotions with creation and learning.

He believes positive feelings are far more productive than negative ones. The development Creativity in this respect, presupposes more than just the simple blowing unwanted feelings ".

Education has a very important place in the application of theories. It is possible to create specific fields of emotional intelligence culture in every different level of food and beverage management.

A change of mentality is needed in order to support new practices.

This will reduce the real labor cost. Despite the personnel's reduction. Quality service can be provided from the existing, working people in the team. The real investment is on the human resource.

3.2 Territory of the family

Many studies have shown that the way parents behave in children has

a profound and lasting effect on their emotional life. Although some

sentimental skills are practiced through friendly relationships as the years go by, emotionally sufficient parents can help their children in their core elements of their Emotional intelligence:

The practice of emotional intelligence enhances the provision of food services

- like, learn to recognize it
- to handle
- to curb their feelings

- and handle the feelings they make in their relationships

Through the emotional sufficiency of parents, the same is created for children.

It is expected, a person with the above qualitative characteristics , when is professionally involved in Food Service sector to offer quality service and high service Level in general.

Conclusion

In the future, it will be necessary to combine both the emotional intelligence and the artificial intelligence , which refers to the intelligence of computers and systems, since development in this field increased rapidly.

As far as the food and beverage management sector is concerned whether it operates within a hotel unit or outside of it. The quality difference in the provision of services will depend on a large extent on this ability. Both for executives and personnel as well as owners.

The environment in workplace has changed very much. There is a constant rotation of people in important positions in the Food industry. People who have never had anything to do with the subject are also entering the field by starting relevant business.

A solution to this situation is education. Through specific seminars, so the people of this industry can acquire this skill. By having psychological thinking its easier for an executive or other employee/ er , to adopte this attitude in life in general .

If he has the physical capacity of empathy and recognition of his emotions, will be easier to see and manage them creatively. Also will be able to recognize the feelings of the other team members , creating calm atmosphere and positive feelings at a time of crisis management. This will have the effect of keeping his team cool , while emotions being transmitted. In other case the effort is bigger, but it is really worth it.

It is no coincidence that the most successful food and beverage professionals in the world are those who, in addition to high intelligence, and managerial skills, have a high level of emotional intelligence.

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The effect of Job Resources on Employees' Work Engagement in Five-star Hotels in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Employees' work engagement (WE) is gaining continuous significance, since it reflects the trend towards 'positive psychology', and represents employees' involvement, devotion to their jobs, and willingness to go the extra mile to help the company succeed. Employees' WE is transferred to clients in the form of high-quality services, and also raises productivity, profitability, customer satisfaction and loyalty, in addition to lower employee turnover. Relevant studies spotted several job resources (JR) that are positively related to employees' WE. JR are those physical, social, psychological and/or organizational job aspects necessary for achieving goals, reducing job-related demands and physiological and psychological costs, and stimulating personal development.

This study's aim is to investigate the influence of different JR, and employees' demographic profiles on their WE and its main dimensions; vigor, dedication, and absorption, and determining WE's current level in Egyptian hotels. Adopting a quantitative research approach and stratified random sampling, 621 five-star hotels' employees were surveyed.

The study came out with significant findings and contributions. JR had a significant positive effect on employees WE's dimensions; vigor, dedication, and absorption. WE level and available JR have been found to be above moderate in surveyed hotels. Among WE's dimensions, vigor was the most influenced by the availability of JR, thus increasing employees' feeling of enthusiasm and passion for work, and dedication and proudness of their job. Whilst, among JR, rewards had the least effect on WE, due to that, in the current tourism depression and unemployment, employees tried to adapt to these circumstances and focused on nonmonetary JR.

Employees' profile dimensions (age, gender, educational level and experience) were positively related to their WE. Higher WE is associated with employees over 40, female employees, employees holding a bachelor degree, and those who enjoyed an experience of more than ten years in current hotel, and in the hotel industry.

In this context, hotel managers should be more knowledgeable of specific JR, and their contribution to develop and create the proper environment and culture that fosters employees' WE in addition to business success, and how to target specific employees' segment with the most vulnerable profiles.

Key Words: Work Engagement, Job Resources, Employees' Profile, Egypt

1. INTRODUCTION: the concept of WE

Employees' WE has emerged as a positive psychological construct of occupational health to measure positive work-related state of mind (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). According to Kahn (1990, 1992), WE involves personal engagement, well-being and psychological presence in the workplace, and the amount of energy and commitment employees have for work. Later, Rothbard (2001), May et al. (2004), Saks (2006) and Bakker et al. (2008), confirming and extending Kahn's findings, supported that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, availability, attention and absorption in job-related roles are linked to WE.

WE also involves organizations' practices towards enhancing employees' emotional and intellectual commitment, contribution and cognitive, behavioral and affective dedication to achieve greater outcomes (International Survey Research, 2003; Hewitt Associates, 2004; Andrew et al., 2012), and creating opportunities for employees to connect with their colleagues, managers and wider organization (Kular et al., 2008), in a way that results in the willingness to go above and beyond what is expected to help the company succeed (Gebauer & Lowman, 2009; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

From employees' perception, WE is comprised of energy, involvement and efficacy (Maslach et al., 2001; Bakker et al., 2008; Kular et al., 2008), and represents their involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm for work. Overall, the most accepted and referred to definition of WE is that of Schaufeli et al. (2002a; 2002b) who defined WE as "a positive fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption".

7 Review of literature

7.1 Benefits of WE

WE provides benefits for individuals as well as for organizations. Park & Gursay (2012) and Bedarkar & Pandita (2014) stated that organizations can utilize engaged employees as a strategic

partner in the business. Martel (2003) claimed that in order to obtain high performance in intangible-products-based tasks that demand innovation, flexibility, and speed, employers need to engage their employees. WE's benefits include positive attitudes towards work and towards the organization, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and low turnover intentions (Salanova et al., 2005; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Hakanen et al., 2006; Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Ram & Prabhakar, 2011; Robinson et al., 2004). It also includes positive organizational behaviors and business performance metrics such as personal initiative and learning motivation, extra-role behavior (Salanova et al., 2005), proactive behavior (Salanova et al., 2005; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Cook, 2012) increased productivity, customer satisfaction and loyalty, and profitability (Harter et al., 2002). For example, a study among about one-hundred Spanish hotels and restaurants showed that employees' levels of WE had a positive impact on the service climate, which, in turn, predicted employees' extra-role behavior as well as customer satisfaction (Salanova et al. 2003).

WE is also linked to better work performance and productivity, and meeting customers' needs and business objectives (Brown, 1996; Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Coleman, 2005; Salanova et al., 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009; Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bhatnagar & Biswa, 2010). For instance, a study conducted by Young et al. (2009) revealed that engaged employees are more friendly, attentive to customer problems, prompt in service delivery, and motivated to recommend appropriate products based on customer needs. WE also have positive outcomes for individuals, including better psychological health (Schaufeli et al., 2003; May et al., 2004; Christian & Slaughter, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2008; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), better physical health (Lockwood, 2007), and lower levels of depression, distress, absenteeism and psychosomatic complaints (Demerouti et al., 2001; Harter et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

WE fosters employees' self-efficacy (Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Salanova et al., 2005; Seijts & Crim, 2006). As stated by Seijts & Crim (2006), engaged employees believe they can make a difference in the organization. Besides, personal positive feelings also exist, such as of happiness, enthusiasm, joy, and optimism (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Less engaged employees are more prone to physical, cognitive, or emotional job-related withdrawal (Kahn, 1990), and burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 1997 & Schaufeli et al., 2002a).

7.2 Dimensions of WE

According to the WE's definition of Schaufeli et al. (2002a; 2002b), three key WE dimensions are derived; feeling of **vigor**, strong **dedication**, and high levels of **absorption**. Vigor refers to high energy levels directed toward organizational goals, on-the-job mental flexibility, employees' readiness to exert needed efforts in their job, and diligence in difficult situations (Schaufeli et al., 2002a, 2002b; Albrech, 2011). Dedication refers to profound work-related psychological involvement, along with productive feelings of respect, enthusiasm, significance, pride, challenge, and inspiration, (Brown, 1996; Schaufeli et al., 2002a, 2002b; Dicke et al., 2007; Mauno et al., 2007). Absorption is being concentrated on and immersed in one's work, quick passing of time on the job, and difficulty to detaching from work (Maslach et al. 2001; Schaufeli et al., 2002a, 2002b).

7.3 Job Resources: Concept and Correlation to WE

According to previous studies, multiple factors influence WE, among which, job resources' (JR) availability is the key driver of employees' WE (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 2002; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hakanen et al. 2006; Llorens et al. 2006; Koyuncu et al. 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al. 2007; Llorens et al., 2007; Mauno et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007, 2009; Bakker et al., 2008; Hakanen et al., 2008; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Weigl et al., 2010; Christian et al. 2011; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Vera et al., 2016).

Moreover, previous empirical studies' findings suggested that lack of JR resulted in job burnout which is the opposite of WE (Cordes & Daugherty, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Leiter 1988, 1991; Maslach, 1998). Furthermore, acting as a mediator, JR had a positive impact on various indicators of organizational commitment (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hakanen et al., 2006) and positive work-to-home interface (Mauno et al., 2007) through enhancing employees' WE.

JR represent various motivational job aspects; psychological, social, physical, or organizational, necessary to minimize job-demands-related negative aspects, and attain organizational goals, and increase personal development, growth, and learning (Demerouti et. al, 2001; Hobfoll, 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007; Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009; Karatepe & Olugbade, 2009; Schaufeli et al., 2009; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Matamala, 2011). Employees may repay their organizations' efforts to provide needed JR by their level of WE (Saks, 2006; Weigl et al., 2010; Altunel et al., 2015). Such JR create psychological meaningfulness and safety for employees, which are needed to be engaged in one's job (May et al., 2004; Main, 2011).

Specifically, JR that drive WE include social support from supervisors and co-workers, performance feedback, coaching, job control and autonomy, task variety, training facilities, rewards, education, and independence at work (Demerouti et al., 2001; Maslach et al., 2001; Bakker et al., 2003; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Hakanen et al. 2006; Llorens et al. 2006; Koyuncu et al. 2006; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al. 2007; Pitt-Catsoupes & Matz-Costa, 2009; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Among JR provided by organizations, two main resources are to be spotted in the current study; job control and autonomy, representing a significant psychological job resource, and rewards, as the main physical job resource.

7.4 Job Control and Autonomy

Representing a basic psychological need for employees (Deci & Ryan, 1985), job control or autonomy refers to employees' independence, flexibility, discretion, and control, decision making possibilities, and utilizing personal discretion for performing job tasks (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1976; Jackson et al., 1993; Parker & Axtell, 2001; Morgeson et al., 2005; Aubé et al., 2007; Stone et al., 2009; Trépanier et al., 2014). It helps increase productivity, performance, positive work experiences, intrinsic motivation, activated states of psycho-physical well-being, and WE (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Sauter et al., 1989; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999; Saavedra & Kwun, 2000; De Lange et al., 2003; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Marinova et al., 2008; Gagné & Bhave, 2011; Liu et al., 2011; Trépanier et al., 2014). Hakanen et al. (2006); Mauno et al. (2007), Van den Broeck et al. (2008)

and Schaufeli et al. (2009) found that job control is among major predictors of WE's dimensions, and within the hospitality industry as well (Salanova et al., 2005; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011). More specifically, job control and autonomy is positively associated with absorption as one of WE's dimensions (Bakker & Geurts, 2004; Bakker, 2005).

According to the previous discussions and implications concerning the importance of providing abundant JR for enhancing employees' WE, and, necessarily, a specific hypothesis has to be stated and investigated concerning the correlation between job control and autonomy and employees' WE: H1: There is a significant and positive correlation between job control and autonomy, and employees' work engagement.

7.5 Rewards

Job rewards are the financial and nonfinancial benefits that employees receive based on their perceived performance and productivity (Matiaske & Weller, 2007; Newman & Sheikh, 2012). In many cases, employees consider rewards as the direct financial compensation consisting of one or more of salaries, wages, incentives, bonuses and/or tips (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). Previous studies stated that employees' WE depends on the level of returns, represented mostly in rewards and financial recognition, which should be a part of the overall company values (Kahn, 1990; Maslash et al., 2001; Koyuncu et al., 2006; Matiaske & Weller, 2007; Sakovska, 2012; Schaetzle, 2016). Whilst lack of rewards and recognition can lead to burnout and disengagement (Maslash et al., 2001).

Consequently, it is essential to hypothesize and investigate the correlation between rewards and employees' WE, as stated in the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a significant and positive correlation between rewards and employees' work engagement.

Finally, it has been noticed, throughout the vast array of reviewed literature, that employees WE has not been clearly correlated with employees' profile characteristics. Few studies have linked WE to employees' characteristics such as gender (Johnson, 2004), and age (Pitt-Catsouphe & Matz-Costa, 2009; Simpson, 2009). And since employees are the main asset in the hospitality industry, the following hypothesis has been introduced:

H.3 There is a significant correlation employees' profile characteristics (age, gender, educational level and experience) with their work engagement.

Since the dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption are those that best reflect how employees are connected and engaged to their work (Roof, 2015), and that they have been mostly utilized by previous studies to measure WE (Stoeber & Damian, 2016); hence, they will be used for further researching the relationship between JR, employees' profile characteristics, and employees' WE.

8 Research Methods

After pinpointing the significance of the chosen research variables via discussing relevant previous studies, the field study is intended to complement and further explores the concepts cited in the

theoretical demonstration. The objectives of the study are to investigate the current status of WE perceptions and JR in five-star hotels in Egypt, examine the relationship between the JR and profile of employees, and their WE.

8.1 Characteristics of the Population and Sample

The current study targeted five-star hotels' employees in Egypt. They totalled 152 hotels at the time of conducting the study (Egyptian Hotel Guide-33st edition, 2013), among which employees of 76 hotels across different touristic areas in Egypt were chosen to be the sample, representing 50% of the population, according to the stratified random sampling technique. The sample thus represents more than 30% of the total population, as required for the sake of further reasonable, reliable generalization attempts (Gay & Diehl, 1992). Questionnaires were submitted to be randomly distributed to employees in the employees catering cafeteria. Table 1 illustrates the total population and the sample selected for conducting this study.

Table 1 Questionnaire distribution on the selected sample among main tourist areas in Egypt

	Area	No. of Hotels/area	% of Population	Location	No. of selected hotels/area	% of sample
1	Cairo	33	22 %	Cairo	17	22 %
2	North West Coast	13	9 %	Alexandria (8), Marsa Matrouh (3), Alamein (2)	6	8 %
3	Canal Zone & Sinai	53	35 %	Port Said (1), Arish (1), Dahab (2), Sharm El-Sheikh (41), Taba (8)	27	35.5 %
4	Red Sea	41	26 %	El Gouna (3), Hurgada (24), Safaga (6), Quseir (2), Marsa Alam (3), Ain Sokhna (3)	20	26.5 %
5	Upper Egypt	12	8 %	Luxor (7), Aswan (5)	6	8 %
	Total	152	100 %	152	76 (50% of the population)	100 %

Reference: The Researcher with reference to Egyptian Hotel Guide, 33rd ed. 2012/2013.

Moreover, selecting five-star hotels is attributable to that they usually enjoy higher business volumes and operate more operations and sales outlet than lower-grade hotels, in addition to serving more demanding guests. Consequently, these implications impose providing ample JR, and necessitate employees who are well engaged in their jobs, thus helping obtain meaningful results and research implications, and ensure that field study efforts are not in vain.

8.2 Scale Development and Data Collection Techniques

The instrument conducted for data collection was the survey questionnaire, with a 5-point Lickert Scale. To assess status quo of employees' WE, the research's survey questionnaire has basically adapted the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), derived from Schaufeli et al.

(2003), which is the most utilized scale to measure WE (Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011), and has been tested in over 10 different countries, using heterogeneous populations, and has been published in many versions. Examples of the studies that adopted the UWES scale are Bakker & Demerouti (2007), Slatten & Mehmetoglu (2011), Rigg (2012), Bedarkar & Pandita (2014), Vera et al. (2016). JR measurement was based on several studies, where Job Control and Autonomy's measure was derived from Digkas & Baltoglou (2014), Pierce & Dunham (1978a, 1978b), while Rewards' measure was developed depending on the studies of Davenport & Prusak (1998), Hargadon (1998), Lawler & Hall (1970), Spector (1985). Employees have been finally asked to provide data concerning their gender, age, educational levels, and experience in current hotel and in the hotel industry.

8.3 Scale's Validity and Pilot Study

Before distributing the questionnaires, a pre-test stage was conducted to perform due adjustments and improvements, and uncover any difficulties which respondent may face while answering the questions. The questionnaire was tested for its validity through the help of 25 academics and colleagues at the Hotel Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Alexandria University; then piloted with 5 employees in a five-star hotel in Alexandria. All pilot study members were not included in the sample to avoid any possible bias.

This pre-test stage's outcomes have been assuring face and content validity and the clarity of questionnaire, ensuring the extent to which the questionnaire statements represent all facets of WE and JR, bringing about experts' opinions and emotional responses, known as test concepts, to different components and concepts stated in the questionnaire, improving and rephrasing of some statements to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding, changing academic expressions to common business terms, deleting or integrating repeated and similar questions, adjusting few double-barrelled and leading questions to ensure complete avoidance of bias, performing slight adjustments to the introduction, discussing and reasoning the technical aspect of statements, determining the time required to fill in the questionnaire, and finally, expecting and being ready for side talks that might arise between the researcher and respondents, if any.

8.4 Questionnaire Distribution and Administration

The final questionnaire form was developed and translated into Arabic. Questionnaires have been distributed in February through April 2016, 20 copies for each hotel (five copies for each of the departments of front office, housekeeping, foodservice, and food preparation/kitchen, to guarantee coverage of front-of-the-house and back-of-the-house staff members). Total questionnaires distributed were 1520 (20 copies in 75 hotels). Only 656 copies were returned to the researcher, among which 621 copies were valid for statistical analysis, representing an accepted response rate of 40.8%.

8.5 Reliability Analysis

The reliability coefficient, Cronbach's Alpha, was calculated to investigate the reliability of the data collection instrument; the questionnaire, after being distributed, and before being further analyzed. The Cronbach's Alpha correlation coefficient for individual variables, and for the whole questionnaire, was safely and sufficiently higher than the cut point of 0.70, which is deemed acceptable by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability test of questionnaire items using Cronbach's coefficient alpha

Scale	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption	WE construct	Autonomy	Rewards	Job Resources	The whole construct
Cronbach's Alpha	.893	.904	.857	.946	.874	.934	.914	.963
No. of Variables	5	5	5	15	5	5	10	25
No. of Cases	621	621	621	621	621	621	621	621

Source: Field Study Results Analysis

9 Results and Discussion

This part first demonstrates the respondents' profiles and hotels' characteristics. The research hypotheses and related variables are then comprehensively analyzed and discussed descriptively and inferentially. Interpretation and discussion of results are provided along with results.

9.1 Respondents' Profile Characteristics

Employees' demographic and job-related data are presented in Table 3. Most respondents were males (80.5%), while female respondents represented only (19.5%). Respondents have been distributed among the three age group categories with the largest proportion within the age group from 20 to 30 years old (55.6 %), followed by those who are in the age group of 30 to 40 years old (29%) and the last age group of more than 40 years old (15.4). The educational level of respondents ranged from Institute/technical or secondary school graduates, representing the highest percentage (53.9%), followed by bachelor-degree holders (41.2 %), while respondents who had less than secondary school education represented (2.7%), and those whose working while studying at faculty (2.2%) had the lowest percentages. Regarding the working experience of the employees, most respondents (58.5%) enjoyed an experience of 1-5 years in their current hotels, followed by those with experience of more than 10 years (16%), those who worked for less than 1 year (14.7%), and lastly those with 6-10 years' experience (10.8%). Also, most respondents had a work experience in the hotel industry of 1-5 years (45.5%), followed by those with more than 10 years' experience (28.1%), those with 6-10 years' experience holders (20.3%), and finally the least percentage of

(6.25%) was for respondents with less than 1 year experience. Respondents were almost equally distributed among the four departments, but the highest percentage of them (29%) were working in Food and Beverage preparation (Kitchen). All respondents were entry level workers.

Table 3 Respondents' Profiles Characteristics

Employees' Personal Data									
Gender	No.	%	Age	No.	%	Educational Level	No.	%	
Male	508	80.5	From 20:30	351	55.6	Bachelor degree	260	41.2	
Female	123	19.5	From 30:40	183	29.0	Undergraduate	14	2.2	
			More than 40	97	15.4	Institute/ technical/ secondary school graduate	340	53.9	
						Less than secondary School	17	2.7	
Employee Experience									
Experience in Current Hotel				No.	%	Experience in Hotel Industry		No.	%
Less than 1 year				93	14.7	Less than 1 year		39	6.2
From 1:5 years				369	58.5	From 1:5 years		287	45.5
From 6:10 years				68	10.8	From 6:10 years		128	20.3
More than 10 years				101	16.0	More than 10 years		177	28.1
Department									
Direct Customer-Contact				No.	%	Indirect Customer-Contact		No.	%
Front Office				150	23.8	Housekeeping		167	26.5
Food and Beverage (Service)				131	20.8	Food and Beverage (Kitchen)		183	29.0

Source: Field Study Results Analysis

9.2 Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

A descriptive analysis of research variables is provided in Table 4, based on the scores reported by employees, where questionnaire statements have been rearranged in descending order per means of scores.

Table 4 Summary of Descriptive Analysis Results of Research Variables

Work Engagement				Level of Repetition								Mean		
				Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often			Always	
				F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%		F.	%
Vigor				Overall Mean of the Vigor Dimension								3.77		
1	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous			13	2.1	62	9.8	135	21.4	205	32.5	216	34.2	3.87

2	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	18	2.9	90	14.3	113	17.9	171	27.1	239	37.9	3.83
3	At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	11	1.7	47	7.4	166	26.3	225	35.7	182	28.8	3.82
4	At my work, I feel bursting with energy	8	1.3	71	11.3	169	26.8	180	28.5	203	32.2	3.79
5	I can continue working productively for extra hours after my shift ends	33	5.2	90	14.3	190	30.1	152	24.1	166	26.3	3.52
Dedication		Overall Mean of the Dedication Dimension										3.95
1	To me, my job is challenging	15	2.4	36	5.7	117	18.5	205	32.5	258	40.9	4.04
2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	7	1.1	58	9.2	118	18.7	212	33.6	236	37.4	3.97
3	I am proud of the work that I do	9	1.4	33	5.2	145	23.0	227	36.0	217	34.4	3.97
4	I am enthusiastic about my job	12	1.9	59	9.4	130	20.6	213	33.8	217	34.4	3.89
5	My job inspires me	16	2.5	57	9.0	150	23.8	184	29.2	224	35.5	3.86
Absorption		Overall Mean of the Absorption Dimension										3.75
1	I am immersed in my work	9	1.4	48	7.6	131	20.8	204	32.3	239	37.9	3.98
2	Time flies when I'm working	19	3.0	36	5.7	180	28.5	189	30.0	207	32.8	3.84
3	When I am working, I forget everything else around me	12	1.9	57	9.0	162	25.7	224	35.5	176	27.9	3.78
4	I get carried away when I'm working	21	3.3	57	9.0	173	27.4	221	35.0	159	25.2	3.70
5	I feel happy when I am working intensely	38	6.0	83	13.2	205	32.5	165	26.5	140	22.2	3.45
Overall Mean of WE												3.82
Job Resources		Level of Employees' Agreement on Implementation										Mean
		Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		
		F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	
Autonomy		Overall Mean of the Autonomy Dimension										3.27
1	I can participate in the decision-making process regarding my work	17	2.7	125	19.8	158	25.0	240	38.0	91	14.4	3.42
2	I have control over the way my work is executed	14	2.2	114	18.1	202	32.0	205	32.5	96	15.2	3.40
3	I'm free to decide my working schedule	53	19.5	123	19.5	165	26.1	168	26.6	122	19.3	3.29

4	This organization gives me the freedom to get the job done rather than insist on following rules and procedures.	37	5.9	134	21.2	214	33.9	145	23.0	101	16.0	3.22
5	If I had a complaining guest, I can offer him/her suitable compensation without approval from my supervisors	109	17.3	120	19.0	153	24.2	163	25.8	86	13.6	3.00
Rewards		Overall Mean of the Reward Dimension										3.26
1	I prefer working in this hotel no matter what I receive as a bonus/ reward	56	8.9	96	15.2	127	20.1	227	36.0	125	19.8	3.43
2	When I do my work well, I receive a bonus/reward	57	9.0	94	14.9	162	25.7	229	36.3	89	14.1	3.32
3	When I do my work well, I receive higher salary / wage or pay raise	52	8.2	117	18.5	157	24.9	223	35.3	82	13.0	3.26
4	My pay is fair for the work I perform	61	9.7	127	20.1	166	26.3	211	33.4	66	10.5	3.15
5	When I do a good job, I receive the financial recognition for it that I should receive	67	10.6	128	20.3	162	25.7	193	30.6	81	12.8	3.15
* F. = Frequency												

Source: Field Study Results Analysis

Means of scores of WE and its dimensions were noted to be moderate to high (3.82). This result goes in line with Seijts & Crim (2006), who identified that most employees in different areas around the world were moderately engaged. This indicates that employees in the selected sample are moderately to highly engaged in their work roles. Among the three dimensions of WE, dedication was the highest, with overall mean of (3.95). In general, more organizational efforts and endeavors are required to engage employees in their jobs. For example, vigor's 5th statement showed the lowest score, indicating that although employees feel energetic at the beginning of their shifts, they are prone to losing this energy gradually during the shift, and at the end of their shifts they simply feel exhausted that they are not able to continue working productively for extra hours. Absorption's 5th statement score confirms this, indicating that employees might not feel happy about being restricted to be totally involved in their daily work routine and that they are, to some degree, mentally detached from the work they perform.

As for the provision of JR, the dimensions of autonomy and rewards showed moderate scores; (3.27) and (3.26) respectively. Job autonomy and control clearly need organizational boost. According to reported scores, employees cannot discretely handle guests' complaints, mainly affecting guests' service recovery satisfaction issues, in addition to employees' decreased control over the approach to perform their tasks and duties, leading to less confident, unsatisfied employee. Regarding the dimension of rewards, it is a positive indication that employees somehow (3.43) prefer working in their current hotel regardless financial remuneration. This might be attributable to the many crises that the Egyptian tourism sector has faced in recent years, where employees might not find suitable vacant jobs with higher salaries, so it's better for them to keep working with low rewards rather than to quit. However, according to other statements' responses, it is still not encouraging for employees not to be rewarded for their efforts.

9.3 Inferential Analysis of Research Hypotheses

In order to determine the relationships among the study variables, regression analysis was utilized to test the relationship between selected JR and employees' WE. Inferential analysis results of research variables are provided in Table 5.

Table 5 Summary of the Inferential Analysis of Research Hypotheses

Dependent Variable Independent Variable		Work Engagement	Vigor	Dedication	Absorption
H1: Job Control and Autonomy	Adjusted R ²	.446	.439	.372	.396
	B value	.668	.663	.610	.630
	T value	22.541	22.234	19.330	20.349
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
H2: Rewards	Adjusted R ²	.369	.367	.310	.321
	B value	.608	.607	.557	.567
	T value	19.210	19.151	16.835	17.277
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

Source: Field Study Results Analysis

H1: There is a significant and positive correlation between job control and autonomy, and employees' work engagement.

WE is positively correlated with job control and autonomy. The first hypothesis was supported (Sig. < 0.01, Adjusted R² = 0.396), indicating that the more job control and autonomy is provided to employees, the more they will be engaged in their jobs.

H2: There is a significant and positive correlation between rewards and employees' work engagement.

WE is positively correlated with rewards. The second hypothesis was supported (Sig. < 0.01, Adjusted R² = 0.321), indicating that the more rewards are provided to employees for their performance, the more they will be engaged in their jobs.

These findings are consistent with several previous studies that identified that job control and autonomy and rewards, among other JR, lead to higher WE (Demerouti et al., 2001; Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2007). Additionally, prior studies revealed that WE is increased if employees feel that they have control over their jobs, and receive rewards and recognition for their outstanding performance (Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

More specifically, regarding the positive significant correlation between job control and autonomy and WE, current research results are congruent with previous research (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Marinova et al., 2008; Stone et al., 2009) who stated that with higher perceived autonomy, employees feel a greater sense of motivation, more WE, greater empowerment and competence. In other words, when hotel employees are given the appropriate authority to control their own work

tasks and deal with work negative situations such as offering suitable compensation for complaining guests, this makes them feel responsible for their work performance, as well as being accountable for the job they do. Therefore, they tend to act like representatives of the hotel organization they work for, increasing in turn their devotion and passion for work and making them more engaged with their work.

Moreover, the idea that the hotel organization's reward system is a significant job resource that has a positive effect on employees' WE has been addressed by many researchers such as (Maslach et al. 2001; Matiaske & Weller, 2007), who suggested that employees reach higher levels of WE in a well-designed compensation system with appropriate recognition and rewards, while a lack of rewards and recognition may lead to burnout, the opposite of WE. They also stated that rewards are energizing, enhances employee performance, makes employees more engaged and encourages employees to stay in the organization.

However, according to results, employees are considering rewards and recognition as a less-influential motivator for their WE. This might be due to that employees are more concerned with gaining more expertise and being promoted, which eventually raises their salaries and provides them with more benefits and job security; or else they might prefer to work in that organization regardless of financial recognition as they are satisfied with other JR provided by that organization. In addition, it was noted during the field study, which was conducted during the time of recession after the crisis of the Russian airplane crash that the employees' salaries and bonuses were at its lowest level in almost all sample hotels. Therefore, those employees might have not considered rewards as their primary work motivator because they believed this would be a temporary procedure, and were more concerned with other motivating JR.

9.4 Contingency Analysis of Research Hypotheses

In order to determine the relationships among contingency variables and WE, ANOVA and means of scores were utilized to test the relationship between selected employees' profile characteristics and employees' WE. Contingency analysis results of research variables are provided in Table 6.

Table 6 Summary of the Contingency Analysis of Research Hypotheses

Contingency Variables	Mean of WE	F Value	Sig.
Age		11.950	.000
From 20 to 30	3.737		
From 30 to 40	3.784		
More than 40	4.190		
Gender		4.242	.040
Male	3.787		
Female	3.958		
Education		10.693	.000

Contingency Variables	Mean of WE	F Value	Sig.
Bachelor Degree	4.024		
Undergraduate	3.766		
Institute/ Technical School Graduate	3.694		
Less than High School	3.282		
Experience in current hotel		5.850	.001
Less than 1 year	3.832		
From 1 to 5 years	3.728		
From 6 to 10 years	3.879		
More than 10 years	4.109		
Experience in the hotel industry		2.956	.032
Less than 1 year	3.463		
From 1 to 5 years	3.809		
From 6 to 10 years	3.859		
More than 10 years	3.889		

Source: Field Study Results Analysis

H.3 There is a significant correlation between employees' profile characteristics (age, gender, educational level and experience) with their work engagement.

WE is significantly correlated with selected employees' profile characteristics (age, gender, educational level and experience). The third hypothesis was supported.

Results revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between the employees' **age** and their WE ($F = 11.950$, $P < .01$). Employees over 40 years old were more engaged than younger employees, with the highest mean score of WE ($M = 4.190$). This result conforms to the findings of previous studies (Pitt-Catsouphe & Matz-Costa, 2008; Simpson, 2009). It is suggested that aged employees who have been with a hotel organization for numerous years are more likely to be engaged, since they are mostly more committed, loyal, and familiar to their organization and related work procedures. Also, they feel more secured and satisfied with their achievements and are seeking for more job stability, and are not willing to quit their current jobs. Whilst, employees in the middle age group may be lacking challenge, and become separated from their expectations, that otherwise might not be met.

Also, **gender** was found to have a significant correlation with employees' WE ($F = 4.242$, $P < .05$), where female employees have slightly higher WE ($M = 3.958$) than males ($M = 3.787$). The reason behind this might be due to that female employees are more dedicated to their jobs as they are looking forward to achieving higher positions and would like to prove themselves as efficient and productive, just like male employees. It is also rationalized that they are more concerned with securing higher standards of living to be more independent, rather than relying financially on their husbands or families. Likewise, female employees are now having almost the same social responsibility of spending on their living, so their jobs become more crucial for them and thus they are exerting all their efforts to stay and excel in their jobs. This result goes in line with previous research of (Johnson, 2004) who pointed out that according to the research of Gallup, women tend to find more fulfilments in their jobs and are more engaged in their work than men are.

In addition, a positive significant correlation is found between the *level of education* and employees' WE ($F = 10.693$, $P < .01$), where employees holding a bachelor degree were the most engaged ($M = 4.024$), while the least engaged employees were those who had less than high school education ($M = 3.282$). This proves that higher levels of education increase employees' WE. Employees with higher levels of education are more engaged in their work because they probably feel that they are achieving their goals in life, as they completed their education and then entered the work, hence they would exert all their efforts to prove they are capable to succeed in their working career. They might also have their own goals to get promoted, and therefore have passion for work. Whereas the less educated employees might feel unfairness and tiredness as they worked before finishing their education. They might also be aware that their promotion opportunities are very limited, hence they lose enthusiasm and feel frustrated that they work only to earn their living or because this is the only work opportunity available for them.

Moreover, *years of experience* of employees was found to have a positive significant correlation with work engagement, where ($F = 5.850$, $P < .01$) for experience in current hotel, and ($F = 2.956$, $P < .05$) for experience years within the hotel industry. The most engaged employees were those who enjoyed an experience of more than ten years in current hotel ($M = 4.109$) as well as the those who spent more than ten years working in the hotel industry recording a work engagement mean score of ($M = 3.889$). This states that the more experience with current hotel or hotel industry, the more engaged the employee will be.

This result is congruent with and confirms the previously stated age results, which indicated that the older, and consequently more experienced employees were more engaged than younger employees. In other words, the older employees who have a long work experience with the hotel facility will be more engaged than younger, less experienced employee. It could be clearly assumed that the more time an employee spends working in a hotel organization or even in the hotel industry, the more engaged he would be. Those experienced employees are more familiar with their job tasks and have good relations with their colleagues and supervisors than new, less-experienced employees. Hence, such experienced employees have more passion and attachment to their jobs, and are more committed to their organizations.

10 Conclusion and recommendations

The importance of WE to organizational effectiveness have been amply confirmed, in addition to the essential role of providing proper and sufficient JR for employees, and their significant, positive correlation to employees' WE. In particular, Job control and autonomy, and rewards were found to correlate directly to WE, in addition to the significant correlation of employees' profile characteristics, specifically age, gender, educational level and experience, to their WE. The results of this study have significant implications for preventing such negative behaviors of employees' disengagement in the Egyptian hospitality sector. These implications can be introduced to the academe, hospitality managers, and to further researching efforts.

First, as for implications for the academe; this study contributes to the research pool of human resources management by conferring attention to the importance of investigating the positive impacts of certain job resources on employees' WE. Human-resources based curricula should be broadened to address more seriously such current trends most beneficial to the hospitality industry.

Moreover, this study provides significant implications for hospitality managers. Being knowledgeable of employees' needs as well as the various effects of different JR implemented in hotel organizations, will help managers and practitioners to develop and create the environment and culture that fosters employees' WE in addition to business success. Engaged employees are more energetic and inspired by their work, to the point that they are happily engrossed in their job tasks. Those employees therefore will help hospitality firms gain much more benefits and secure its success in the highly competitive work environment.

Therefore, it is very important that hotel managers set a strategy to periodically measure employees WE, and carefully analyze and discuss the results, to find out and provide employees' mostly desired and motivating JR that make them more engaged in their work. Such periodical measurement is crucial to uncover cases of decreased WE, relevant organizational symptoms, reasons, due improvements and actions.

More specifically, managers and supervisors should work on increasing their employees' job control and autonomy, through allowing and even encouraging them to participate in decisions that are relevant to them, to exert control over the way their work is executed and scheduled, and, most essential, empowering them to resolve and handle situations involving service failures and guest complaints without the hierarchical need to get approval from supervisors or managers. Moreover, rewards and other forms of financial recognition should be carefully designed and directed to be fair and correlated to employees' performance.

Furthermore, concerning employees' profile characteristics, hotel managers should offer the less engaged employees with growth and advancement opportunities, training, and other benefits that would help to decrease unmet expectations and disengagement for them. Likewise, managers can provide older workers with performance incentive and opportunity to utilize their knowledge and expertise in the hotel facility and invest their increased WE.

Still more implications are directed to further research. The present study has surveyed JR's correlation to WE only in five-star hotels in all five main touristic areas in Egypt. Further researches can enlarge the sample size to survey other hotel categories like three- or four-star hotels in Egypt. The current study also focused on reviewing the perceptions of only the employees of four hotel departments, so it would be a good chance for other researches to investigate other department employees' perceptions that might or might not be engaged in their work for example, accounting, recreation, sales and marketing, maintenance and others.

In addition, the study was directed to the hotel sector only; further researches can be done in other sectors in hospitality industry such as; restaurants, cruise ships, and hospitals. In addition, further research can use other variables rather than job resources to deepen the understanding of the most effective factors that have a positive effect on employees' WE, such as personal resources. Another suggestion would be using WE as a mediator between JR availability and customer satisfaction or any other important organizational variables.

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Investigating the potential use of E-HRM: the Context of Egyptian Hotels and Travel Agents

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, information technology (IT) plays a dominating role in each and every sector with its technology up-gradation. Human resources Department is increasingly depending on IT in the form of e-HRM (Electronic Human Resource Management). E-HRM is a process where all the activities of HR professionals are converted into electronic for the sake of smoother employee and employer relationship in the workplace, reduced administrative burden, as well as, simpler and easier organizational process. However, there is relatively little research on factors that influence e-HRM use, particularly, in a HRM challenging area, like Tourism & Hospitality Industry.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the current status of e-HRM application in Egyptian Hotels and Travel Agents, specifically in payroll management, employees' database, recruitment, performance management and knowledge management. In doing so, determinants of e-HRM will be explored. The determinants include Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI) and Facilitating Conditions (FC) will be studied. The study also aims to investigate the probable challenges facing e-HRM application.

A convenience sample of twenty three establishments included travel agencies, tour operators and 4 & 5 star hotels. Respondents included HR managers or assistant/general managers. Eventually, the study is expected to contribute to the existing e-HRM literature by representing an overview of the current status of e-HRM in Egyptian Hotel and Tourism sector.

Keywords: E-HRM, e-HRM determinants, behavioral intention, acceptance theory.

1 INTRODUCTION

There have been major changes in the way human resources (HR) has been managed in recent years (Obeidat, 2015). Particularly, the way HR practices and functions are delivered with the use of information technology. (Strohmeier, 2007)

E-HRM can be defined as “a way of implementing HR strategies, policies and practices in organisations through the conscious and directed support of web technology-based channels in order to comply with the HR needs of the organization (Ruël et al., 2004, p. 281). It has been argued that the implementation of e-HRM can be extremely valuable to the organisation. In particular, it will increase productivities by dropping down HR operational costs. It can also be used flexibly on an unlimited number of occasions at little or no marginal cost. Lastly, the effective use of e-HRM can free up HR professionals to provide strategic value to the organization. (Heikkilä and Smale, 2011)

The use of e-HRM has been researched with some limitations. (Obeidat, 2015) For example, there are partial empirical findings for the relation between e-HRM and HRM effectiveness. Few studies also have pointed out the expected consequences of introducing e-HRM within an organization as well as the strategic value of e-HRM. (Bondarouk and Ruel, 2009 and 2013)

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the current status of e-HRM in Egyptian Hotels and Travel Agents, in doing so; level of application, determinants and challenges of e-HRM will be explored.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's knowledge- based economy, the organizational success and its competitive advantage is depending heavily on the performance of HRM. (Masum et al., 2016; Adli et al., 2014) Within the past few years, electronic human resource management (e-HRM) has been another face of human resource (HR). This new face has been arising based on internet and intranet technologies. There are many reasons for HRM's needs for IT for its powerful capability in accelerating processing, in handling complexity of all HRM issues and in measuring the performances HRM practices need to learn and track.

Most of E-HRM definitions are general and emphasize the internet-supported way of performing HR policies and/or activities. Some researchers claimed that e-HRM has been interchangeably coined with Intranet-based HRM, virtual HRM, web-based HRM and HRIS. (Masum et al., 2015) However, Kabir et al. (2013) specified that E-HRM is defined as an integrated information system that comprises some applications of HR supply and demand forecast, HR planning, staffing information, recruitment and selection, information on training and development, pay increase, compensation forecast, promotion-related information, employee relations, and so on.

Nevertheless, Strohmeier (2007) presented a specific definition that works well with the objects of this study. E-HRM is the planning, implementation and application of information technology for both networking and supporting at least two individual or collective actors in their shared performing of HR activities. This definition highlights two main feature of e-HRM; namely,

the idea of interaction and networking of e-HRM besides the multilevel nature of e-HRM as it requires the involvement of the whole organization that interact in order to perform HR activities.

The literature distinguishes three types of e-HRM in terms of their potential goals: operational (salary management and maintain employees' database), relational (training and development, recruitment, performance management), and transformational e-HRM (knowledge management, strategic re-orientation). (Strohmeier and Kabst, 2014; Rajalakshmi and Gomathi, 2016)

The main goals of e-HRM are improving HR services and effectiveness, cost reduction, and improving strategic orientation. (Normalini et al., 2012; Ruel et al., 2007 and Obeidat, 2015) This is owing to its ease of speedy accessibility to information related to employees, eliminating of unnecessary HR activities and improving the strategy of decision making process. (Rodríguez and Ventura, 2003; Marler and Fisher, 2013 and Lakshmi, 2014)

On the other hand, factors like shortage of management attention, fear of high costs, lack of experience, and lack of training on e-HRM are the main challenges for implementing e-HRM. (Jahan, 2014; Kabir et al., 2013) Determinants of e-HRM adoption can be categorized as organizational, technological and environmental determinants. Organizational determinants represent some administrative characteristics which influence adoption of E-HRM such as a skilled workforce and top management support (Troshani et al., 2011; Teo et al., 2007). Technological determinants represent the manner where technology characteristics can influence adoption, as strong organization's technology infrastructure indicates the technology readiness of a firm. (Oliveira and Martins, 2010) Environmental determinants describe the area where organizations conduct their business, and include industry characteristics, and supporting infrastructure. (Oliveira and Martins, 2010 and Troshani et al., 2011) Previous researches asserted that unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) frames most of the determinants of the e-HRM usage as it refines the critical factors related to the intention to use a technology, like e-HRM, in an organizational context. (Venkatesh et al., 2012) Within the theory, the determinants had been classified into (performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence).

Previous researches exposed that e-HRM practices are essentials in many business contexts (Hotels, banking sector, health care). Results revealed an appreciation of e-HRM applications in association with HRM effectiveness, talented management, differences in the relative weight of using e-HRM categories. (Bondarouk et al., 2009; Obeidat, 2015; Choochote and Chochiang, 2015 and Alkerdawy, 2016) Nevertheless, reviews evaluated e-HRM research area acknowledges the opportunities to continue to refine this important area of research. (Maler and Fisher, 2013) Baum (2015) confirmed that HRM is still a challenge for the tourism and hospitality sector due to its dynamic nature.

The current study mainly aimed at finding the emerged applications of e-HRM in Tourism and Hospitality industry in Egypt. It depicts the current status of E-HRM application and shed light on the challenges related to its application. The specific objectives of the study are to appraise to what extend e-HRM is currently applied in some core HR functions, to appraise the perceived importance of the above functions from management point of view, to examine the potential reasons behind the deviation between actual application and perceived importance, to explore determinants of e-HRM, including Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI) and Facilitating Conditions and finally, investigating the probable challenges facing e-HRM application. Eventually, it is expected to contribute to the knowledge of electronic human resource management in Egypt's tourism and hospitality sector, as one of the developing countries.

3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1 Sample Selection

A convenience sample of twenty three establishments participated in the current study. Convenience sampling techniques is proved to be effective during exploration stage of the research area. (Saunders, et al, 2012)It included travel agencies, tour operators and 4 & 5 star hotels, representing a number of hotel chains working in Egypt. The participants were approached personally via e-mails and phone calls to explain the idea and the significance of the study. Then links of the online questionnaire were sent to them. The study is conducted during April, 2017. Data for the study were collected using a questionnaire administered to human resources managers, or assistant/general managers.

3.2 Measures

The questionnaire was divided into four parts. Part one asked about the type of the organization and the respondent's current position. In the second part respondents were asked to indicate to what extent certain types of e-HRM are applied in their establishments and the level of importance of these types from their point of view. The types included 1/payroll e-management, 2/Employees database, 3/e-recruitment, 4/e-training, 5/e-performance management and 6/Knowledge management. These six types represented operational, relational and transformational aspects of e-HRM. (Strohmeier and Kabst, 2014; Maatman, 2006; Obeidat, 2016; Rajalakshmi and Gomathi, 2016) Scale for extent of application was "totally applied", "partially applied" and "not applied"; scale for importance level was "great importance", "moderate importance" and "no importance".

The third part investigated the determinants of e-HRM. Items measuring the e-HRM determinants (i.e. performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence) were adopted from a questionnaire that had been previously used in research on the UTAUT model, developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003). The original questionnaire was adapted to accommodate the context of e-HRM. A five-point Likert scale was used, and every item could be scored as follows: 1 indicating "strongly agree" and 5 indicating "strongly disagree". Facilitating conditions were also investigated as an e-HRM determinant and its items were adopted from Maatman (2006).

The fourth part of the questionnaire asked respondents to identify the challenges that might be facing e-HRM application from their view. Six statements were adopted from Hossain and Islam (2015) and were rated on five-point Likert scale.

4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The study covered 11 travel agencies, 7 "5-star" hotels, 4 tour operators and one "4-star" hotel. Respondents included HR managers or GMs (Assistant GMs).

Table (1) Levels of importance and application of e-HRM types

Types of e-HRM	High Importance		Moderate Importance		Low Importance		Mean	Totally applied		Partially applied		Not Applied		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%		F	%	F	%	F	%	
e- payroll management	21	91.3	2	8.7	0	0	1.09	14	60.9	8	34.8	1	4.3	1.43
Employees database	22	95.7	1	4.3	0	0	1.04	12	52.2	9	39.1	2	8.7	1.57
e-recruitment	11	47.8	12	52.2	0	0	1.52	6	26.1	10	43.5	7	30.4	2.04
e-training	12	52.2	11	47.8	0	0	1.48	10	43.5	5	21.7	8	34.8	1.91
e-performance management	10	43.5	13	56.5	0	0	1.57	5	21.7	11	47.8	7	30.4	2.09
Knowledge management	17	73.9	6	26.1	0	0	1.26	8	34.8	10	43.5	5	21.7	1.87

It is apparent from results in table (1) that, basically, all types are considered important by respondents; "employee database" came on top of the list with mean = 1.04, followed by "e-payroll management" with mean = 1.09, meanwhile, the different types of e-HRM were not widely applied. The most applied e-HRM type was "e-payroll management" with mean = 1.43; the least applied was "e-performance management" with mean = 2.09, followed by "e-recruitment" with mean = 2.04. These results came in agreement with Strohmeier and Kabst (2014). Similarly, a study conducted on hotel business in Phuket showed that 85 % of the recruitment system, as well as, 94 % of the performance assessment system had never applied the use of the e-HRM. (Choochote and Chochiang, 2015)

Table (2) Paired Sample T-test for comparing importance vs. application of e-HRM

		Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	E-payroll Management	-.348	.573	.119	-.596	-.100	-2.912	22	.008
Pair 2	E-database	-.522	.665	.139	-.809	-.234	-3.761	22	.001
Pair 3	E-recruitment	-.522	.730	.152	-.838	-.206	-3.425	22	.002
Pair 4	E-training	-.435	.945	.197	-.843	-.026	-2.206	22	.038
Pair 5	E-Performance Management	-.522	.790	.165	-.863	-.180	-3.166	22	.004
Pair 6	Knowledge Management	-.609	.783	.163	-.947	-.270	-3.730	22	.001

It is assumed that traditional recruiting systems may be preferred because they provide prospects with the opportunity to obtain customized information about various factors. Stone et

al.(2006), Bissola and Imperatori (2013) and Adli et.al (2014) also argue that e-performance can only be used for low level jobs with objective performance standards and may not have the capacity to measure all of the behaviors that workers must perform. Therefore, it is suggested that tourism and hospitality sector, being heavily depending on human factor, may not find e-performance management a proper way to evaluate employees' performance.

Importance and application levels were significantly different in all types of e-HRM, as shown in table (2). The most significant differences were depicted between importance and application levels of "e-database" and "knowledge management". This raises a question about the reasons behind this discrepancy, and urges the study of e-HRM determinants in the study establishments.

Table (3) Application of e-HRM in Hotels versus tour operators and travel agents

Type of Organization		E-Salary Management	E-database	E-recruitment	E-training	E-Performance Management	Knowledge Management
Tour Operator	Mean	1.50	1.75	2.00	1.50	2.50	1.75
	Std. Deviation	.577	.500	.000	.577	.577	.957
Travel Agency	Mean	1.64	1.82	2.36	2.55	2.27	2.18
	Std. Deviation	.674	.751	.809	.820	.786	.751
5-star hotel	Mean	1.00	1.00	1.57	1.14	1.57	1.43
	Std. Deviation	.000	.000	.787	.378	.535	.535
4-star hotel	Mean	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
	Std. Deviation	.000	.531	.009	120	.321	.000
Sig.		.099	.045*	.208	.003*	.136	.229

Table (3) results indicated that 5-star hotels, followed by tour operators, had the highest application levels of different e-HRM types if compared to other establishments. It is assumed that International hotel chains have the capabilities and the necessary resources for acquiring different technology applications. Furthermore, they accomplish most of their functions on a central basis, where they act as a unit among hundreds of units around the world managed by a particular chain, thus, carrying out their daily functions via internet or intranet is a must, in order to be able to share information. This view is supported by Strohmeier and Kabst (2014); in their study they proposed that the particular size of organizations determine their readiness for e-HRM adoption. The results also showed that the most significant differences among establishments were seen in "e-training" and "e-database", with significance 0.03 and 0.045, respectively.

Table (4) showed that respondents agreed most on "performance expectancy" statements, mean = 1.9348, as determinants of e-HRM; a view that is supported by Yusliza and Ramayah (2012), Alkerdawy (2016) and Rajalakshmi and Gomathi (2016). On the contrary, was the case of

"effort expectancy" with mean = 3.6522. It was apparent from the results that respondents expected to pay an effort in order to be able to understand, use and operate e-HRM technology. On the other hand, respondents agreed on the advantage of e-HRM in accomplishing HR tasks quickly and efficiently. This result is in line with previous studies which found that the use of e-HRM enhances the operational HR activities' implementation (Marlerand Fisher, 2013; Adli et.al, 2014; Obeidat, 2016). The statement "if I use e-HRM technology, I will increase my chance of getting a raise" recorded the highest agreement level with a mean = 1.52, meaning that respondents believed that using e-HRM technology is a potential path for raise and promotion in their careers. Meanwhile, they disagreed on statements like "Working with e-HRM technology is clear and understandable" and "Learning to operate e-HRM technology is easy for me" with mean = 3.78 and 3.70, respectively. This indicates that there is still some users' anxiety about using new technologies in operating HR functions. Obeidat (2016) suggests that organizations with technological nature, like telecom sector, supports e-HRM adoption and use, since its employees possess high level of IT skills which facilitate e-HRM adoption and use.

Table (4) Determinants of e-HRM

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Performance Expectancy											
I find e-HRM technology useful in performing my P&O tasks/activities	14	60.9	0	0	1	4.3	0	0	8	34.8	2.48
Using e-HRM technology enables me to accomplish P&O tasks more quickly	18	78.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	21.7	1.87
Using e-HRM technology increases my productivity when performing my P&O tasks	17	73.9	0	0	2	8.7	0	0	4	17.4	1.87
If I use e-HRM technology, I will increase my chance of getting a raise	19	82.6	0	0	2	8.7	0	0	2	8.7	1.52
Overall mean of Performance Expectancy											1.9348
Effort Expectancy											
Working with e-HRM technology is clear and understandable.	7	30.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	69.6	3.78
It is easy for me to become skilful at using e-HRM technology	7	30.4	0	0	2	8.7	0	0	14	60.9	3.61
I find e-HRM technology easy to use.	8	34.8	0	0	1	4.3	0	0	14	60.9	3.52
Learning to operate e-HRM technology is easy for me	7	30.4	0	0	1	4.3	0	0	15	65.2	3.70
Overall mean of effort Expectancy											3.6522

Social Influence												
People who influence my behaviour think that I should use e-HRM technology.	12	52.2	0	0	5	21.7	0	0	6	26.1	2.48	
People who are important to me think that I should use the e-HRM technology.	7	30.4	0	0	7	30.4	2	8.7	7	30.4	3.09	
In general, the organization has supported the use of e-HRM technology	8	34.8	0	0	5	21.7	1	4.3	9	39.1	3.13	
Overall mean of Social Influence											2.898	6
Facilitating Conditions												
My organization has the financial resources necessary to use e-HRM technology.	9	39.1	0	0	3	13.0	0	0	11	47.8	3.17	
My organization has the knowledge necessary to use e-HRM technology.	9	39.1	0	0	4	17.4	2	8.7	8	34.8	3.00	
E-HRM technology is compatible with other systems I use.	6	26.1	0	0	5	21.7	0	0	12	52.2	3.52	
A specific person (or group) is available for assistance with e-HRM technology	8	34.8	0	0	4	17.4	1	4.3	10	43.5	3.22	
Overall mean of Facilitating Conditions											3.2283	

It was clear from table (5) that respondents disagreed most with the statement " E-HRM functions is not value additive" with mean = 4.30; this comes in agreement with their opinion about "performance expectancy" as one of the e-HRM determinants, discussed above. Meanwhile, the necessity of training employees handling e-HRM emphasized the respondents' point of view about "effort expectancy" cluster previously discussed. The necessity of training for handling e-HRM operations was basically agreed on, with mean = 2.27. A result that is in agreement with Bissola and Imperatori (2014), in their study technology attitude of employees moderated their acceptance for e-HRM.

Table (5) Challenges facing e-HRM application

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Challenges											
E-HRM operations is costly	7	30.4	0	0	5	21.7	2	8.7	9	39.1	3.26
E-HRM function are time Consuming	1	4.3	0	0	5	21.7	1 2	52.2	5	21.7	3.87
Inadequate IT set up and number of expertise	7	30.4	0	0	2	8.7	0	0	14	60.9	3.61

Necessity of training for the people handling the operations	12	52.2	0	0	2	8.7	1	4.3	8	34.1	2.27
E-HRM functions is not value additive	0	0	0	0	4	17.4	8	34.8	11	47.8	4.30
Resistance from the user employee (Manual Vs system)	4	17.4	0	0	6	26.1	5	21.7	8	34.8	3.57
Overall mean of challenges										3.5797	

Overall, respondents did not believe that e-HRM application is facing obstacles or serious challenges; unlike the findings of Sylvester et.al (2015), who stated that developing countries find difficulties in e-HRM operation due to poor maintenance culture, lack of technical know-how, bureaucracy and paper work and work community resistance. Furthermore, Hossain and Islam (2015) argued that most of the software is built in outside the country where some customization needed, add to this resistance to change, cost factors and lack of organizational learning.

Table (6) Pearson correlation for study variables

		Importance	Application	Performance Expectancy	Effort Expectancy	Social Influence	Facilitating conditions	Challenges
Importance	Pearson Correlation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Application	Pearson Correlation	.292	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.177	-	-	-	-	-	-
Performance Expectancy	Pearson Correlation	.360	-.135	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.091	.539	-	-	-	-	-
Effort Expectancy	Pearson Correlation	.348	.402	.540**	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.103	.057	.008	-	-	-	-
Social Influence	Pearson Correlation	.507*	.403	.412	.610**	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.013	.056	.051	.002	-	-	-
Facilitating conditions	Pearson Correlation	.077	.583**	-.009	.405	.255	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.727	.004	.969	.055	.240	-	-
Challenges	Pearson Correlation	.274	.042	-.255	-.244	-.068	-.070	-

	Sig. tailed)	(2- .206	.851	.240	.261	.759	.751	-
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*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation analysis indicated significance relation among a number of study variables. (Table 6) Importance of e-HRM types was significantly related to "Social Influence"; sig. = .013. It is assumed here that respondents' readiness and colleagues/supervisor encouragement about adopting e-HRM is associated with its perceived importance from their point of view. Not surprisingly, "facilitating conditions" is significantly related to e-HRM application level; sig. = .004. This comes in line with Masum, et.al (2015), who suggest that the firm's infrastructure and the compatibility of its current digital-data resources are determinants for e-HRM application, examples are, secure networking system, sufficient back up plan and swift internet facility.

"Effort and Performance Expectancy" were also significantly related to each other; sig. = .008. It is suggested that despite the effort and time that should be paid in order to excel in operating e-HRM functions, respondents see that the benefits in performing these functions quickly and efficiently will be harvested, eventually. Similarly, Yusoff et.al (2015) found that the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness were significantly related. Furthermore, "Effort Expectancy" and "Social Influence" contained a significant relation; sig. = .002; this agrees with the findings of Voermans and Veldhoven (2007) and Yusliza and Ramayah (2012). Obviously, the support one can get from organization and colleagues would help overcoming the challenging efforts related to learning how, operating and mastering HRM functions in their electronic version.

4 CONCLUSION

The present study has contributed to the knowledge of human resource management area through providing significant insights on the determinants that influencing the managerial decision to adopt e-HRM in the context of Tourism and Hospitality industry in Egypt as a developing country. It ensures the importance of operational e-HRM as important and applicable in Tourism and hospitality organizations. In contrary, the transformational e-HRM lacks neither importance nor application within the organizations.

This study similarly provided empirical evidence supporting the relevance of e-HRM in increasing HRM effectiveness. Most importantly, perceived usefulness, managers' readiness, the colleagues, managerial support as well as IT infrastructure are major determinants of applying e-HRM. From a managerial perspective, findings of the study have strategic implications for managing e-HRM programs. Appropriate preparation for the organization socially as well as physically will help to apply the concept more widely. The expected consequences would exceed the predictable effort of adopting e-HRM.

Even though systematic research procedures were used, this study had some limitations that could be addressed in future studies. The study data are cross-sectional. Longitude data collection would help in determining more causality.

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All the new technologies are good for the Hungarian Hospitality Industry?

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Abstract

A new segment, new technology, new expectations of quality appeared on the international hospitality market. Millennials have become the fastest growing customer segment. High quality service is the only way to ensure loyal customers for hotels. Innovative technology is a must have: electronic /mobile check-in time is here. Reputation Management is the focus of guest reviews and comments. Know your guests, satisfy their needs and create your services around them is the best recipe of a successful hotel operation. Due to new technologies, and changes in guest behaviour, consumers' satisfaction is everything, but not easy.

One of the most important priorities in education is, to be able to provide the most up-to-date information to our students about their future professions. Recent changes in the hospitality industry should be followed as well as the appearance of new legislative provisions, or latest technologies, for instance. This paper presents a pilot study which included six in-depth interviews with hospitality professionals from which an overall picture of 50 Hungarian hotels was gained.

Key Words Innovative technology, Millennials, OTA's, Reputation Management, Real Time Marketing

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, consumer behaviour in the international hospitality sector has changed dramatically. The 'new' consumer the **Millennials** has become the fastest growing customer segment within the hospitality industry. Millennials, as the member of the newly formed consumer society, always has the problem with shortage of time. Therefore, all the solutions that are effective and fast mean the way to success. As a result, the importance of up-to-date information has increased. According to Rauch (2014) this consumer segment is interested in utilizing technology to do things that many others have become accustomed to doing manually: checking in to hotels, making up their restaurant and bar bills and looking up places to eat, shop and play, to name a few. In addition to wanting technology, Millennials have no problems speaking up. If what they are looking for is not handled to their liking, they will turn to Twitter, Facebook, Yelp or TripAdvisor to voice their complaints (Rauch, 2014).

If the hospitality industry wants to react immediately to the arising demand, they should be aware of the new emerging trends.

2. 1. INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

This new segment of Millennials is very demanding and expects high quality services from commercial accommodations. Therefore, **customer service** is strongly highlighted among the new trends in the hospitality industry in 2015. In the past years, the adaptation of the tools of electronic and information technology in the tourism industry forced the customers as well as the suppliers to keep learning. Due to the rapid changes in technology, the role of new online tools like social media and mobile applications formed a very strong influencing power on the customers' decision making procedure on travelling. "High tech, high touch" (Naisbitt, 1982) is the service, the e-tourist wants from hotels. Buhalis and Jun (2011) say, E-tourism represents the *paradigm-shift* experienced in the tourism industry as a result of the adoption of ICTs and the Internet

Innovative technology became one of the most important issues in the operation of hotels. Electronic check-in can be done either by mobile phone or by an Apple watch. But what is electronic check-in exactly? Most hotels are offering it as a part of their "Loyal Guest" programme. Customers registered as Preferred/Privileged guests are sent key cards equipped with the latest identification technology that uses radio frequencies. On the day of a guest's confirmed arrival, a text message is relayed to his mobile device, carrying basic figures like room number, timing, etc. Upon his actual arrival, client does not need to confirm his stay at the Front Desk. He simply moves to his room and applies the key-card. (Sanghi 2014)

1.1. Guests can use their mobile phones as the key to the hotel room

Hilton Worldwide launched digital check-in with room selection technology, now available at more than 3,700 hotels, and worldwide by the end of this year. This technology empowers Hilton HHonors members to check in via their HHonors profile on desktop, mobile or tablet and choose

the exact location of their room - right down to the room number. (Hilton Worldwide,2014). Starwood is already offering mobile room key in a number of Aloft, Element and W hotels. Mobile room keys bring the following benefits to both the guests and to the hotel (according to the brands and the door lock companies): Seamless Check-in, Reduced load on Front Desk, Convenience & Choice of Service for the Connected Guest, and Increased TripAdvisor Scores (*Kinsella, 2015*)

1.2.Apple Watch is the new hotel room key

The upcoming new Apple Watch (apple.com./2015) is a possible game changer for travelers everywhere: the era of losing a hotel cardkey may soon be gone. “Starwood hotels is developing an app for the Apple Watch that will allow hotel guests to use it to unlock their rooms. In honor of the recently revealed Apple Watch™ Accor is launching an Accorhotels iOS app available starting at the end of April”. The Accorhotels app for Apple Watch™ will be available in ten languages and works in connection with the smartphone app. In addition to promoting hotels and destinations, the app will allow users to manage current bookings. (Accorhotels app for Apple Watch (2015) If the hoteliers want to satisfy the guests’ demand they have to be aware of the latest technologies. The most online specific products are the services of the tourism industry. Since the emergence of the Internet, travel planning (e.g., travel information search and booking) has always been one of the main reasons that people use the Internet. (Buhalis, 2003). The cost of tours can be high, consequently, good prices always play an important role in the planning and selection of a holiday destination. Nowadays on-line travel agencies (OTA’s) with their good prices and special travel packages come before hotels’ websites in popularity. (Veres and Grotte, 2009)

2. ONLINE TRAVEL AGENCIES (OTA’S) VERSUS DIRECT BOOKING

How to increase revenue and at the same time decrease the costs of OTAs is the question here. Distribution channels play a very important role in the hospitality sector. However, the commissions the hotels pay to the Online Travel Agencies can range from 15-30% and that causes problems by reaching the targeted REVPAR. So, the solution is to increase direct hotel bookings. The reach of OTAs has risen by 45% since 2008 in spite of the fact that travelers booking directly on the website is cheaper for hoteliers. The answer is simple; it has nothing to do with the travelers or the OTAs, but it is to do with the hotel website. (Patak, 2014). OTAs like TripAdvisor, Expedia and Booking.com will clearly be listed on the first 4 results, when you look up accommodation. Patak (2014) says, that having an easy-to-navigate, effective and attractive website wherein everything from rates to rooms to services and packages are clearly highlighted. An excellent website with all important details and strong booking engine are the key to reclaiming victory over OTAs. But, according to Matur (2014) as OTA commission checks continue to rise, small and mid-sized hoteliers are increasingly considering TripConnect as a viable platform to generate direct bookings.

3. REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

According to Yu and Singh (2002) one of the major challenges for electronic commerce is how to found a relationship of trust between different parties. Creating trust is non-trivial, because the traditional physical or social means of trust cannot apply directly in virtual settings. In many cases, the parties involved may not ever have communicated before. Reputation systems seek to address the development of trust by recording the reputations of different parties. For reputation management, Tripadvisor is one of the most important platforms in the hospitality industry. But online comments and reviews can come e.g. from Facebook, Yahoo, Yelp and Expedia (OTA) as well. Rauch (2014) suggests that hotels use only one tool instead of different ones for managing a property's reputation process. Based on his opinion, one of the means is Revinate as a complete, one-stop solution for reputation management instead of the cumbersome process of logging onto each platform and spending an exorbitant amount of time on a crucial yet time consuming aspect of the hotel industry. Engaging with guests and responding to their needs publicly through these forums can go a long way in driving future bookings to the property.

3.1 But what is revinate all about?

Revinate, a San Francisco-based technology company that is reinventing the hotel guest experience, has launched inGuest in Europe. inGuest brings together reservation (PMS) data and stay histories, with preferences, social media activity and guest feedback to surface comprehensive rich guests profile on a single platform. For the first time hoteliers can truly understand their guests and engage with them more effectively before, during and after their stays, increasing guest satisfaction and revenue. (Revinate.com, 2015)

As we can see above, apart from good quality service and interactive communication with potential guests, flexibility is a key issue for hoteliers these days. A good marketing plan for a given period of time is a must for each hotel. However, the fast changes in the macro environment requires flexibility from hotels. Real time marketing is the answer for this challenge.

4. REAL TIME MARKETING

According to Trackmaven (2015) "Real Time Marketing is marketing that is based on up-to-date events. Instead of creating a marketing plan in advance and executing it according to a fixed schedule, real time marketing is creating a strategy focused on current, relevant trends and immediate feedback from customers. The goal of real time marketing is to connect consumers with the product or service that they need now, in the moment." Through social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) sites, companies can gain information about their segments. With this knowledge, in a few minutes, hotels can easily define their up-to-date marketing messages. But, the content must be valuable for the potential guests. If, hoteliers strategically structure their advertisements to reflect a current event (e.g. Formula1 after party, fashion show, etc.), their service may become more appealing to guests. The application of this type of marketing must take place on a regular basis and include guest-generated content. Whether it is Facebook or another social media tool, guests should be able to contact the hotel with an expectation that they will receive a response in a timely manner. Video campaigns (e.g. Flip to) on social media, when done properly, are proving to be successful

for hoteliers looking to generate guest engagement. Flip.to allows hotels to connect with guests from the moment they make a reservation and to create a unique experience upon arrival. (Rauch, 2014). Gary Vaynerchuk, a well-known Internet entrepreneur and author, famously said, “Content is king, but marketing is queen, and runs the household.” Creating great content for your website and/or blog is helpful, but good content alone will not drive the results a hotel desires. A quality content marketing strategy sets a purpose behind the content. Despite the importance of content for SEO, it will only drive results and increase brand awareness when deploying content with a custom marketing strategy. (DeVoren and Herweg (2015).

5. PILOT STUDY: RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

As part of a pilot study to explore the opinions of Hungarian hospitality professionals about their knowledge and use of technology in hotels, six in-depth interviews were undertaken in summer 2016. This enabled the researcher to gain insights into the practices of 50 hotels on the Hungarian market.

“Selling the Right Room to the Right Client at the Right Moment and the Right Price. On the Right Distribution Channel with the best commission efficiency” (Landman,2011). This is the task either of the General Manager, depends on the size or policy of the hotel, and/or the Revenue Manager. They are the ones who should be well informed about the latest and the most efficient technological solutions in the sector. Therefore, I chose 6 professionals, from different types of hotels (independent hotel, thermal&wellness hotel, city hotel, small and big size hotel, hotel chains) who altogether represent 50 Hungarian Hotels. These hotels have very strong positions on the Hungarian Hospitality market. My In-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face, and over the telephone to get a deeper insight to these specific new technologies.

5.1.The interviewees

- 1. Director of Central Reservation and Revenue Management of Danubius Hotels Group:**
I gained overall information about the 10 hotels in Budapest (2 have separate revenue and sales due to the brand Hilton and Radisson), 10 hotels in the Countryside, and 24 hotels abroad, concerning my topic of new technologies. The company is on the market since 1972, and has a very strong position. (Later Danubius)
- 2. Cluster Revenue Manager of Mamaison Hotel Andrassy Budapest, Residence Izabella Budapest, Starlight Suiten Hotel Budapest.** (3 hotels in Budapest) Mamaison Hotels & Residences brand is the part of the CPI, Czech **hotel group**, that operates total of 28 hotels in 5 countries. (Later Mamaison)
- 3. General Manager of Opera Garden Hotel & Apartments (Budapest)** – independent small hotel with 35 rooms, high score on TripAdvisor (9.2), with its own mobile application system. (Later Opera Garden)

4. **Revenue & E-commerce Manager at Buddha-Bar Hotel Budapest Klotild Palace.** – 5 star special hotel – Buddha Bar concept. Here in Budapest it belongs to the Mellowmood Hotels Group. (Later BuddhaBar)
5. **General Manager of Aquaticum Debrecen Thermal & Wellness Hotel**** - Countryside-** It provides a very special tropical environment and a Mediterranean Aqua Park inside the hotel. (Later Aquaticum Debrecen)
6. **Head of online hotel and tourism division at BDO Ltd.** (The company gives advices and assistance ont he fileds of hospitality investmnets, revenue management and online marketing) (Later BDO)

5.2. Apple Watch and/or Mobile Phones are the new hotel room key

All the interviewees in the pilot study had heard about this technology, but none of them use it. According to **Mamaison** this can be a special tailor-made service for a guest, but for the hotels from a financial point of view it is a great challenge. Return on Investment (ROI) is the key issue for the management. All the professionals agree with the issue of ROI, and **BuddhaBar** says that the number of mobilephones' reservation are still not so high here in Hungary. On the other hand for a newly opened hotel it would be a good chance to apply this technology. **Danubius** says that the application of the technology depends on the segments of the hotels. This technology is good for big city hotels, but not for the countryside ones. Most of their Millennials who come to Budapest, are not demanding for high tech, but parties and cheap prices. **Aquaticum Debrecen** agrees with Danubius about the different needs of the segments. It is not worthwhile investing in such a technology in the countryside. **OperaGarden** says that for small independent hotels apart from the financial issue, the present technical condition of the hotel and staff training are also playing a very important role. According to **BDO** this technology is good for well-known hotel chains and newly opened hotels, but ROI is not measurable.

5.3.OTAs versus Direct Booking : TripConnect

Mamaison and Aquaticum Debrecen do not use this technology, it costs a lot (costs: business listing on TripAdvisor & CPC (ClickPerClick)). **All the participants** agreed that this solution at the moment is good for the OTAs only, due to the amount of their rooms and strong financial background. They pay very low price for CPC, but hotels pay a lot. **Buddha Bar** uses TripConnect, because the hotel operates on very high average rates, and therefore the ROI is also high. **Danubius** uses this service only for 3 hotels in Budapest, later on they wish to have it for all the hotels in Budapest, but not for the countryside. **Opera Garden** has just stopped TripConnect, because of the costs and the bad ROI. For small independent hotels this is not a good. solution, they would need support from TripAdvisor. According to **BDO** this technology is good for well-known hotel chains, but not for individual hotels.

5.4.Reputation Management: Revinate: InGuest

The representatives of the hotels neither heard nor use this technology. **Mamaison** says In Guest is not good for small and middle size hotels, due to the lack of human- and financial resources, and technical background. **Buddha Bar** and **Opera Garden** agrees with Mamaison, they do not want to use this technology in the future. Apart from the lack of resources, **Buddha Bar** says there is an ethical issue here: who can tell where the line is between privacy and taylor-made service? **Aquaticum Debrecen** has exactly the same oppinion about this question. According to **Danubius**, InGuest could increase reputation. **BDO** says, hotels in Hungary has serious challenges at the moment (eg.: lack of human resources), they are not ready for such a technology.

5.5.Real Time Marketing

Real Time Marketing: All the participants say that real time marketing needs a lot of time, a good professional team, and strong financial background. Hotels do not have capacity for this. **Buddha Bar** and **Danubius** outsource these tasks. **BDO** adds that the management of the hotels need measurable facts for ROI, and the activity of real time marketing can not be measured.

6. SUMMARY

In recent years, consumer behaviour in the international hospitality sector has changed dramatically. The 'new' consumer the **Millennials** has become the fastest growing customer segment within the hospitality industry. This new segment is very demanding and expects high quality services from commercial accommodation. Therefore, **customer service** is strongly highlighted among the new trends in the hospitality industry in 2015. **Innovative technology** has become one of the most important issues in the operation of hotels. Electronic check-in can be done either by mobile phone or by an Apple watch. Distribution channels play a very serious role in the hospitality sector. How to increase revenue and at the same time decrease the costs of OTAs is the question here. A good marketing plan for a given period of time is a must for each hotel. However, the fast changes in the macro environment requires flexibility from the hotels. Real time marketing is the answer for this challenge. The application of this type of marketing, must take place on a regular basis and include guest-generated content. Simply creating original content will not keep the SEO strategy current in 2015. As part of a pilot study to explore the opinions of Hungarian hospitality professionals about their knowledge and use of technology in hotels, six in-depth interviews were undertaken in summer 2016. This enabled the researcher to gain insights into the practices of 50 hotels on the Hungarian market. All the interviewees in the pilot study had heard about the "AppleWatch and MobilePhone as roomkey" technology, but none of them use it. The participants agreed that TripConnect at the moment is good for the OTAs only, due to the amount of their rooms and strong financial background. The representatives of the hotels neither heard nor use InGuest. The management of the hotels need measurable facts for ROI, and the activity of real time marketing can not be measured.

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The use of social media as a tool for acquiring knowledge and collaborative environment in Tourism - The Case of Greece

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ABSTRACT

Social media are not only a very effective communication tool, but also is a tool for knowledge management and promote a collaborative environment, particularly with customers (Shan et al, 2011). Surveys have shown that social media have enough information and are a reliable tool for information about tourist destinations and one in three that this information is sufficient to evaluate a tourist destination. Thus, although the attitude of tourists across social media are positive, but it seems that there is a gap in the issue of adequate and reliable information about tourist destinations in social media (Munar et al, 2013). Of course, it should be mentioned that social media can be a source of important knowledge. For example, a complaint from a customer can show that there is indeed a problem somewhere and get into the tourism business in the process to terminate. This shows that it can and tourists to become a part of management and give value to the business (Leung et al, 2013). In this case it must be noted that it is a very interesting area that certainly deserves more scientific research, particularly in regarding the Greece. Can the majority of professionals in the tourism industry to think of social media as a means of communication, but the reality is that it can become a knowledge acquisition and management tool as collaborative solutions.

Keywords: Social Media 1, Knowledge Acquisition 2, Tourism 3, Greece 4, Collaboration 5

JEL Classification: L83, L84, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of social media and the subsequent changes in user behavior, create a new reality for the tourist business which should be adjusted promptly and efficiently, both to take advantage of emerging marketing opportunities and on the other to survive in an environment intense competition, as tourism. The study therefore the problem is particularly important and much more for Greece, where the economic crisis threatened the viability of tourism businesses while simultaneously sought economic and efficient ways to display and promote their products. In this context, the facility services with the largest contribution of 45.3%, resulting in tourist GDP of the country from tourism expenditure (IOBE, 2012) and the adoption of social media as tools of marketing, exhibit increased research interest.

This paper will concentrate on the case of the use of social media as a tool which will contribute on acquiring new knowledge and a collaborative environment where the tourist companies will use the social media as a mean to acquire such knowledge from its own customers. For example, when a customer writes a review or a complain, this is not always something negative. In this way the social media will have a useful role not only as a communication tool but also as a tool to collect and acquire new knowledge and collaborate with the clients. The objects that have specifically investigated so far, according to the literature, mainly on the impact of social media, the travel planning (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Xiang and Gretzel, 2010; Ye et al., 2011) and in shaping perceptions (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009; Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer, 2012) and customer loyalty (Sparks and Browning, 2011). However, there is a need to further investigate the case of

how social media can be a mean to collect new knowledge and to collaborate with the customers on this, since there is a lack of related literature, something that gives value on this.

2 METHODOLOGY

This is a literature review which will examine the value of information and data management for a tourist company. Hence the methodology of this paper relies on the use of already made researches and papers; this is a literature review. The source of papers has being from various databases such as science direct and ESCBO. The paper will introduce the concept the use of social media as a tool for acquiring knowledge and collaborative environment in Greek tourism. The value of this paper is that it will connect the concept of Knowledge with the concept of tourism and how it is applied on the tourist sector.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN TOURISM MARKET

The Internet is a very important tool for travel planning from potential visitors tourist destinations around the world. Consumers are increasingly using the Internet to gather information about their upcoming trips (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010) and further bookings and purchase of all or part of the tourism product made to a very large extent via the Internet. As stated in the European Travel Commission report for 2010, 64% of travelers for pleasure and 65% of travelers for business purposes, used the Internet to plan their trips, including booking airline tickets and accommodation in hotels.

The collection of information for the tourist product until recently limited to the official websites of tourism enterprises and any other body or organization that displays a tourist destination. The emergence of social media on the Internet, included in the so-called Web 2.0, allows more consumers to exchange with each other all kinds of information about trips they have made (Chan and Denizci Guillet, 2011), which in addition informative acquire and advisory value. It is a fact that more and more consumers are seeking information on products / services in the various social media and less on traditional media of television, radio, magazines etc. (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). According to a survey of Insites Consulting conducted in 2012 in 19 countries, six out of ten Internet users visited at least once a day a social networking site and 50% of post information about products, brands and companies.

The feature that attaches great value to the social media of the Internet is that users create themselves their content (Jin, 2012; Leung et al., 2013) as opposed to traditional media, where consumer is a passive message receiver (Bruhn et al, 2012). As characteristic point, Leung et al. (2013) state that the social media have been widely adopted by consumers to search and organize their travel, and for sharing and commenting on their travel experience through weblogs (blogs) and microblogs, such as Blogger and Twitter, to online communities such as Facebook and

TripAdvisor, content sharing sites like Flickr and YouTube and many other collaborative tools character.

The participation of users in the production of the content of the media, revealed a new form of word of communication mouth, e-word of mouth that is changing the relationship between business and customer in every corner of the globe (Sparks and Browning, 2011). Consumers as users of social media can now when making purchasing decisions or choosing a product, seek advice from older buyers (Sparks and Browning, 2011), where only friends are not included, relatives and their other close persons but people from different parts of the world, unknown to each other (Pan et al 2007). As a consequence of these developments, it can be considered to increase the bargaining power of the consumer, as he now has access to more impartial and transparent information, which comes from other consumers and not by companies.

After the mid-90s the Internet has brought sweeping changes in the distribution of tourist services. The low cost web design and the growing tendency of consumers to purchase tour packages via the internet gave a new impetus to small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector but also to destinations market distributors is not calculated in their bids. Consumers soon discovered that they could make reservations at a much lower cost than that offered by the tour distributors (Middleton. et al.2009)

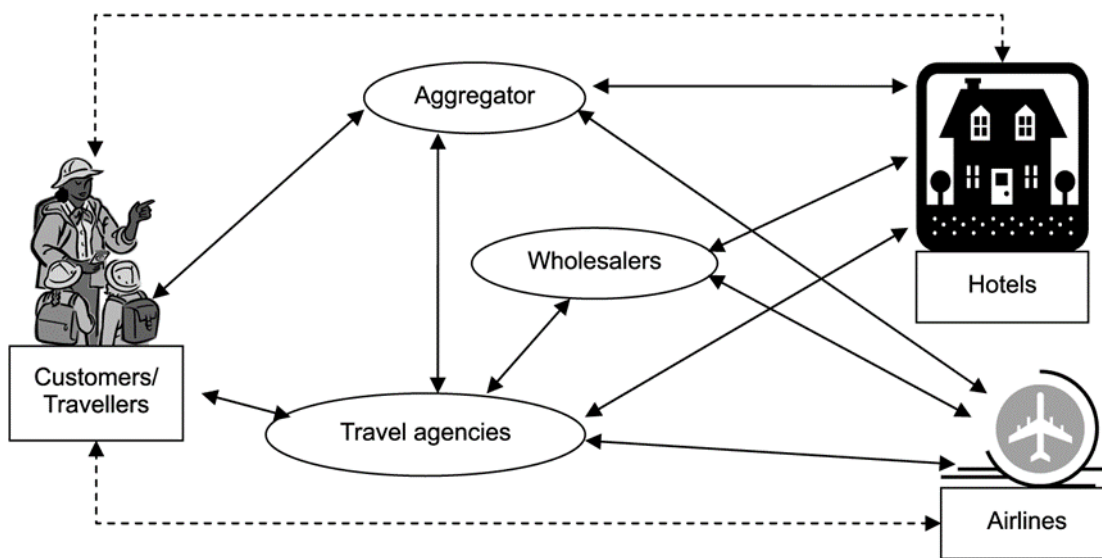
Brown and Locket (2007) describe the distribution system as modeled after the mid-2000s in the following figure:

The research of Brown and Lockett (2007) states that the tourist consumer can buy tourism products with both methods. The first is the traditional through intermediaries such as tour operators and tour operators. O second directly through tourism enterprises, often having as intermediary websites that offer free tourist offers like booking.com and expedia.com. As mentioned by Kim. et al (2007) in many cases tourist destinations have formed their own websites on which it can seek free accommodation and other tourist services. The end result is to reduce the costs of tourist services to 30%, and through social media can now tourists to be in direct contact with the company and to interact even with visitors. Furthermore changing the shape of competition with small and medium businesses that offer alternative and quality tourist services have made a dynamic entry into the market at the expense of something larger companies that are for the benefit of tourists.

The Internet has affected the way of promoting tourism organizations and destinations and this naturally affects the behavior of tourists as international consumers. Brown and Lockett (2007) point out that the Internet allows all tourism businesses and destinations to promote their products at very low cost, which can not be done with the use of traditional means of promotion. Middleton et al (2009) report that in the traditional marketing the main promotional tool for small destinations were the brochures and internet use multimedia allows the use of photos, videos and even a browser (virtual tour) and the feedback from social media is a tourist destination. This way the tourist can have a better view of the destination and decide on the choices made.

For tourism businesses, these new data are particularly important because the tourism industry is based on a very heavily in information handling. Since the decision to market the tourism product requires significant involvement in terms of time and effort for the consumer, the voltage potential buyers helped collect information through review websites, to online communities and other social media (Gretzel and Yoo , 2008). Businesses therefore should explore ways in which to integrate

social media into marketing tools used to exploit the possibilities of communication with their customers.



3.2 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE AND A CREATING A COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT

In today's society where work takes up one-third of the life of modern people, the holidays have become a necessity. Particularly in Greece but also in the world, tourism has great importance for the economy and society in general. Potential travelers have different personal needs and characteristics such as gender and age, socioeconomic status and the factors of the individual psychology exert influence on the final choice of a tourist destination and the conditions under which they will spend their holidays. Below are analyzed some of the processes that the person follows and the choices made on the road to ensure the holidays, with special reference to the influence of the use of the internet and especially social media, in consumer behavior.

The procedure followed by the traveler to any destination selection is subject to the logic sequence providing a stimulus of this stimulus analysis and action based on the stimulus. The stimulus from the environment, through the interaction or effect of the tourism marketing and of course through acquiring the necessary knowledge from other tourists who have used the social media to make comments. The message is analyzed by the upcoming traveler based on the temperament and the factors that characterize it, and the effect of the terms of destination choice and the decision to purchase other tourist services. According to Buhalis & Law (2008), the cost, the duration and the free time, the type of product, but also the nature of the provider of the tourist service, play a role in the final decision. Social media, in this frame of reference, playing a more important role since the customer will have the chance to see what other say. However the hotel also will have the chance to seek some important information regarding its performance such as some negative or positive comments. At the same time, it is important to show up that it listens to its customers and hence it is willing to collaborate with them.

In order to understand how important is to assess the existing knowledge and to make the tourist to collaborate. The tourist's decision about the final destination can be understood by P.I.E.C.E. model Morgan's in marketing (Middleton, 2001). This model includes the following five steps: identifying a problem (problem recognition), the subsequent information search (information search) and the inclusion of options available (evaluation of alternatives), then the final decision to purchase the service or product (choice of purchase) and, finally, evaluation after purchase (evaluation of post-purchase experience). In relation of the use of social media, the tourist company or hotel in charge with the aim to attract the holiday maker in the sense that "need" vacation. After the first step, the tourism company must be familiar with sites where 'frequented' potential tourists and make the service or the hotel available and visible. So, at this point, it is important for the side of the hotel to acquire the necessary information and to transform it into a new knowledge. For example the trends of tourists or what they are asking for most of the times is a useful knowledge that the hotel's management would have to collaborate with the tourist so to extract it.

In evaluating alternative tourists compare the options and features, and the final decision touches upon the personal preferences for the type and location of the holiday, the type of facility, and other elements of the service provided, but also by the confidence in the company with which thinks to cooperate. The Tourist Company or hotel here has the purpose or role to adapt to customer preferences, or to change the customer's perception in relation to the destination or hotel (Middleton, 2001). After the decision, the tourist company should maintain the process of booking and payment as more utilitarian and austere may and, on the internet, it depends on the quality and ease of use of the company's website, but also on the possible supply option live feedback of the company member to complete the reservation and / or payment without difficulty. Finally, the evaluation after the service purchase (or rent accommodation) can be pushed towards a positive direction when the tourist company continues to interact with the tourist, not persistent and recurring but rather with gravity and clarity. Later, after leaving for the journey and upon return from vacation, it is clear that the hotel and the same destination itself will determine absolute degree satisfaction traveler - and the tourist company approach can enhance any positive experience and impression of the traveler obtained, for example through incentives from the hotel for the return of the traveler in the future and the question to the traveler if you wanted to change something in a future visit. The evaluation process is the most important for the process of acquiring the knowledge. This is the point where the tourist will evaluate his experiences on social media. It is important from the side of the hotel to collect this data and to make the tourist to become part of the hotel's development.

There are some additional steps that the tourism business must take into account in its attempts to lure the traveler to purchase the product or service or renting accommodation. Buhalis & Law (2008) cite a number of actions and tactics that a hotel can add to marketing mix in order to maximize the benefit. In particular object of the use of internet, Tourist Company / hotel that aims to motivate consumers to travel will be curated content appearance and overall quality of the site, information and social networking capabilities that it provides. For example, the emergence of the corporate website should stand out and not reminiscent of similar websites of other similar companies (World Tourism Organization, 2008). In addition, the information provided should be broad and refer to specific details of the destination, accommodation, and their characteristics, so that the tourist can organize his time and the options adequately, but should and there is the provision of interconnection with other cooperative or non-competitive sites so that the potential

traveler may go to hotel page with ease (World Tourism Organization, 2008). Kotler et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of using social media as a mode of interaction for the final decision. In the conventional model of taking a decision on tourist destination, friends and relatives may play a role. With the help of internet and social media, the newest model online social media often play the same, basic or complementary role.

When the final decision is taken and the traveler is in the hotel, the dedication in the service can be strengthened through the adoption of specific policies, such as the recruitment of new technology (eg, choice of meals through the internet) the provision of tempting options (eg free visit and photographed landmarks in the area) and the ability of customers to directly update their personal pages on social media (Kotler et al., 2010). In this way the endearing practices of tourists after the end of their journey to share pictures can be accelerated. The use of such options may seem opportunistic and speculative, but it is a great opportunity to enhance the online image of the hotel which, if not exploited, can lose it if, for example, visitors discover other, more interesting scenery and interest and decide not to "move up" images from the hotel.

The reactions of the potential of tourism enterprises and tourist clients of hotel establishments vary from person to person and from situation to situation. Each visitor is attracted by different features and options available, and even the same person at different periods of his life, can seek and fascinated by different things. Consequently, the provider of tourism services must take into account these differences when developing the marketing mix and apply, to the extent that it is realistic, in a personalized approach to each visitor based on both the online profile on social media and other available features.

The incentives governing a potential visitor provide the tourist business an asset to form the best possible image to optimize satisfaction. Social media is, in this context, a particularly useful tool in this direction. Some of the variables that influence the choice of tourist information including gender, age and ethnicity, all those are an important knowledge that the tourist company can use as a knowledge. Thus, women appear to be particularly keen on the use of new technologies and especially in sites with tourist information, compared with men who do not show any clear preference (Coulter & Roggeveen, 2012). While young adults aged 25 to 35 years prefer devotional sites with tourist content and "Room conversation» (chat rooms) as a means of collecting tourist information, while older adults over 50 years old have a more neutral stance (Spars & Browning, 2011). The nationality of the tourist visitor seems to be another relevant factor. For example, the Northern Europeans tourists tend to prefer a combination of information from the Internet and from their traditional local travel agent while in other countries, the nationality factor does not seem to play an important role (Varmeulen & Seegers, 2009). All of the above conclude that the social media can be tool which will help the hotel's management collect valuable information, while it will transform the guest into a valuable partner of the hotel

4 DISCUSSION

The internet is an important tool for all disciplines. But important is the presence of tourism enterprises on the Internet for the reason that it allows almost all companies to have direct access to the public through social media and influence the audience and behavior. Middleton et al (2009) refer to the fact that in today's economy based on information via the internet is the greatest benefit

for small and medium-sized destinations. For many years, especially in the 90s, the tourism industry depended on a few intermediaries, particularly tour operators, which govern thousands of companies in the industry. Small businesses were not the necessary resources to access directly to consumers since advertising from traditional media require significant financial resources and manpower. After the mid-90s the Internet has brought sweeping changes in the distribution of tourist services. The low cost web design and the growing tendency of consumers to purchase tour packages via the internet gave a new impetus to small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector but also to destinations market distributors is not calculated in their bids. Consumers soon discovered that they could make reservations at a much lower cost than that offered by the tour distributors (Middleton et al, 2009)

Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010) reported on the positive advantages of advertising platforms such as Google AdWords and advertising through social networks like Facebook. The advantage of these ads, except for very low cost, is the potential for providing targeted advertising based on the demographics of users and their geographical distribution. With the proper use of the keywords (keywords) can the tour operator to have direct access to the target audience. Middleton et al. (2009) write that can for a small financial consideration to place the site of landing the first choices of search engines. Indeed reports that the effective use of advertising mechanisms like AdWords has made Google (which is the AdWords creator) to be among the largest companies in the advertising industry and has increased revenues from traditional providers advertisements like newspapers and television. It should be mentioned that there is no official statistics but mainly studies such as the GTO and SETE, which is the most recent (December 2014) and was made in collaboration with Google, based in statistics Oxford Economics, in order be the Grow Greek Tourism Online.

The main points of the study carried out by the above entities were:

- The use of social media and the internet in general by tourism operators in Greece is not expected
- The increase of internet use can result in GDP growth of 3% and 100,000 new jobs
- There is space for a 20% increase in bookings through internet (Newsbomb, 2014).

From SETE (2014) stated that the Internet can be changed, if it has not already made the purchase in the hotel industry. Already Tsiotsou and Ratten (2010) predicted that by 2016 over 80% of bookings will be made through Internet. This means that changing the structure of the industry, since functions such as travel agents will decrease and consumers will buy services directly from the provider.

Actually, what is important, is to turn the customer / guest into the partner of the hotel and to extract valuable information. For example the positive or the negative evaluation of the services made from the customer and to use this information as valuable knowledge which will help the hotel to improve. It is understood that the customer becomes a valuable partner of the hotel. Of course from the side of the hotel it is useful to construct methods where the customer will operate as the sole partner and he will provide valuable knowledge in a collaborative environment.

Overall, Undoubtedly, the internet has impacted every business life. The tourism industry has allowed several companies that previously had very limited exposure to the public, they can interact with potential visitor's tourist destinations and hotels using social media and promote their services.

Through the new Internet economy formed, the great benefit sometimes obscure or limited scope destinations have gained (Middleton et al., 2009). As we have seen, until the '90s, the tourism industry was the absence of alternatives, dependent on a small number of large companies-intermediaries, which absorbed a disproportionately large part of the revenue derived from thousands of tourist enterprises. Small businesses did not have the financial capacity to carry out major advertising campaigns to increase their brand awareness in the general public, as the traditional ways of promotion was unprofitable in terms of financial and human resources. The logic of reduced costs, the web offers many economic opportunities for advertising, such as Google AdSense program and the Facebook social networking medium. Beyond affordability, the big advantage of these technologies is the ability to target ads to specific layers of the users into account dozens of variables demographic characteristics and geographical distribution (Tsotsou & Ratten, 2010). By careful use of keywords (keywords), the tourism companies, whether large or small, gain accessibility to population subgroups that have chosen to promote travel and hotel products and services. Also it is vital not only to target tourists but also to bring them close with the company so to provide their own testimonies and experiences through social media. Hence the social media are becoming a tool for acquiring new knowledge and turn them the tourist into a collaborator of the hotel industry. This is something that almost every Greek tourist business must seek, since SEKE (2014) has argued that most of the Greek hotel businesses do not know how to use the social media and to acquire the knowledge which is in it.

5 CONCLUSIONS

With the use of new technologies in tourism all operational functions may be supported. New technology provides all the tools that are necessary to find significant profitable sectors in the market to promote products with specialized instruments. Through new technologies can reduce costs and greatly increase awareness, communication and the way the tourism industry function. High technology enables the consumer through the tools which offer to buy the right product while giving suppliers the tools that are necessary for the development, management and distribution of their products worldwide. Through new technology, the tourism industry can develop and to market products which wishes. The paper examined how the social media can become an instrument of acquiring knowledge from the customers while at the same time the customer turns into a useful source of information; actually someone who can collaborate. This is very useful for the Greek tourist companies so to turn them their social media and their customer's information into a useful source of competitive advantage. It is important, though, to examine the view of the companies in this sector. For this reason, it is proposed that for a future research it would be useful to make a qualitative data in sample of managers who work on the sector so to see how they are working the social media in the real cases and what are the potentials of the use of social media.

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Managing Reputation Online: Engagement with Customer-Generated Reviews (Egyptian Travel Agencies Perspective)

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, in an internet-driven world, information travels very fast and instantaneously spreads around the world. Comments, reviews, opinions from customers through online review platforms determine a business online reputation. Reputation is the most valuable asset consists of past actions, direct experience and future expectations. Online Reputation Management (ORM) in tourism business is about being authentic and transparent about provided services and using customers' feedback to guide the areas that might need improvements. Therefore, setting up a strategy for effective management of online reputation can directly influence business performance. Hence; travel agencies have to take advantage of their online presence through maintaining an active attendance on major reviews sites and popular social channels. Engaging with Customer-Generated Reviews (CGRs), acting immediately on their feedback, having innovative website interface and being standby at all times are important issues for travel agencies that empower them to develop their business. This enables them to gain control of the situation, protect their valuable reputation and increase customers' trust which will result in achieving business goals and gaining competitive advantage. Therefore; the purpose of this research is to contribute to the limited researches on online reputation management by discussing the concept of ORM and its practices in the Egyptian travel agencies. Furthermore, it attempts to understand how they manage customer generated reviews on different review platforms, as well as, discovers the influence of managing reputation online on the tourism business. The study concluded that there are some practices related to ORM actually applied by Egyptian travel agencies, but haven't been done through a clear strategy or an announced plan. The findings of the study recommended that Egyptian travel agencies managers should consider an obvious plan for ORM determining its policies and tactics and update it continuously according to the requirements of online business environment. In addition; ensuring enough interaction with customers' generated reviews must be considered to identify their needs, expectations, satisfaction level and present their requirements. This study will be a starting point for additional studies in this area of research in the future.

Keywords: Online reputation management, Review Platforms, Customer-Generated Reviews, Review Sites, Tourism Business, Tourism Organization, Egyptian Travel Agencies.

6 INTRODUCTION

Reputation has an intangible value and a massive significance for tourism business (Cole, 2012). It is the most important strategic and long-term organizational asset delivers value for any company (Petkevičienė, 2014; Tischer & Hildebrandt, 2014; Hang et al., 2012). This intangible asset is now increasingly seen as a driver of sustainable competitive advantage especially for the travel industry (Iwu-Egwuonwu, 2011, p: 197). Reputation has been documented by different authors as an evaluation that customers make about the organization over time (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Vollenbroek et al., 2014; Dolle, 2014). It is formed as a result of past actions and customer's direct experience and also influences others' expectations of the organization (Floreddu et al., 2014).

As people spend more time on the Internet, Online Reputation Management (ORM) becomes growingly important for tourism organizations (Ott & Theunissen, 2015). It is certainly influenced by the new business environment resulted from the dispersion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Sotiriadis & Zyl, 2013; Buhalis, 1998; Lopes et al., 2014). This development encourages innovations in the tourism business and has a tremendous impact on reputation management (Østergaard, 2009). The popularity of different online review platforms induces tourism organizations to maintain a positive online reputation and manage the success of their business via electronic channels. In addition; customer-generated reviews have been continuously gaining credibility in the eyes of many people and has a great influence on others' decision making process (Proserpio & Zervas, 2016, p.2; Buhalis & Law, 2008)

To further describe of this new trend in travel industry, this study contributes to the limited researches on online reputation management in tourism business by discussing the concept of ORM and investigating the strategies and tactics that Egyptian Travel Agencies (ETAs) use to manage their reputation online. Furthermore, it attempts to understand how ETAs manage customer-generated reviews, as well as, discover the influence of online reputation management on tourism business. The researcher combined several data sources to add richness to this research. The results of this paper will contribute to the theoretical and empirical knowledge on ORM in travel industry and provide directions for future researches.

On-Line Reputation Management (ORM):

There is no doubt that the technological advancement in the digital age affected the way services providers manage their business reputation. According to Dolle (2014) in past, before the widespread use of ICTs, organizations could control the available information about their business through traditional methods such as placed press announcements and good public relations managers in order to protect their reputation. Floreddu et al., (2014) also emphasized that

organization reputation was formed only via unidirectional communications organizations distributed to stakeholders, who could only marginally interact with and react to these messages. Consequently; organizations have no control when customers attack their business through negative opinions regarding hotels, travel destinations, and travel services. Hence; reputation damage can be the result, which may have harmful influences on the overall results of business (Horster & Gottschalk, 2012).

But now with the rapid growth of the Internet and WWW, organizations have the ability to observe and enhance their reputation online in order to achieve business success (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). They could transmit information to a variety of people and deal effectively with customers' content on different review platforms (Dolle, 2014; Lopes et al., 2014; Schniederjans et al., 2013). Thus; business reputation is now made online. The concept of reputation management focuses to a greater extent on review sites and social networking sites and in consequence can be seen as online reputation management (Holve, 2014). As a result; Dolle (2014) stated that the concept of *Reputation Management* has expanded with *Online Reputation Management (ORM)*.

Hung et al., (2012, p:85) define online reputation management as “the process of analysis and management for people and organizations’ reputation represented by content among all kinds of online media”. However; Horster& Gottschalk (2016) described online reputation as a product of a communicative process which derived from direct experiences and influenced through information exchange and social interaction by customers and suppliers within social networks and review sites. According to Holve (2014, p:3) the tasks of online reputation management involve “interacting with people online, creating shareable content, monitoring what stakeholders are saying, keeping track of their dialogue, addressing negative content found online, and allowing up on ideas that are shared through social media”.

Online reputation management also can be considered as a set of policies and approaches that organization designed to organize and protect its online image and visibility. It is the mission of monitoring, dealing with, or correcting undesirable or negative mentions on the internet (Holve, 2014). This new approach of reputation management enables service providers to overcome time, distance and location constraints (Pires et al., 2006). Reviews, comments and opinions determine business online reputation. This can be very useful for the travel industry, which provides intangibles, unpreserved and heterogeneous services that cannot be evaluated before the consumption (Litvin et al., 2008).

It's vital to mention that ORM strategy is about creating a prominent online presence and be prepared all the time to respond and interact with customer-generated reviews. This may be accomplished by setting ORM plan or strategy and update it continuously according to the requirements of online business environment.

The process of Online Reputation Management:

Litvin et al., (2008) illustrated that service providers in the tourism sector have to be very keen on designing strategies to manage their online reputation. They should have a prepared ORM strategy. This is due to the intangible features and the high risk involved in purchasing tourism

services. Therefore; online reputation management process must be executed in an efficient way, in order to proactively defend organizations from customers' attacks which certainly affected business's online image. This can be done through the following stages:

Managing reputation online initially requires an active presence in the social web (Lopes et al., 2014). One of the most important tactics for ORM is *managing content online*. At first; having a professional website with an innovative interface and creating basic profiles on major review platforms is a necessary part of doing business in today's information age. This empowers tourism service providers to develop their online presence. On the other hand; website is not just an information system, but also an interface with a vendor, that is potentially relevant relationship marketing tool (Gefen et al., 2003). In this regard; organizations have to protect their online accounts and thinking well before posting something on social networking sites as it could be shared within minutes around the world by someone.

Secondly, managing reputation online necessitate to *set up monitoring system* in order to examine the organization's image and how customers thinking about it. Holve, (2014) and Floreddu et al., (2014) demonstrated that tourism organization has to recognize its current level of reputation. Furthermore; its reputation should be compared with competitors in the tourism market. Nowadays, there are many different and free tools available to monitor all online mentions for business (Lopes et al., 2014). Tourism organizations can set up alerts to be notified when their business mentioned online to insure information in current such as E-mail alerts, Google Alerts, TripAdvisor alerts, Facebook alerts.... etc. Catching this content early allows tourism organizations to discover and respond to negative content resulted from customers' attacks and correct it before it worsens and turns into a crisis which probably could harm business reputation (Miguéns et al., 2008). What have to be monitored in this phase are searches, ratings, reviews, recommendations and customers' complaints (Holve, 2014). It can be a chance to handle problems and in the end make even disappointed customers happy (Benea, 2014).

The third fundamental phase of ORM is *customer engagement and feedback analysis*. This includes react to mentions, enter to online conversations with customers and respond quickly on their comments and questions (Floreddu et al., 2014).

Ultimately; ORM process includes *learning from the experiences faced by the organization and updating the ORM strategy*. It refers to learning and evaluation part. (Holve, 2014). This stage based on the assessment of the situation as a whole and the results or effects achieved from the current strategy. Recognizing the points of strengths and weaknesses in current ORM strategy is required to be avoided later. Also; it is necessary to modify and develop organization's ORM plan according to these experiences.

From the above stages; it can be claimed that there are few basic rules for effective ORM strategy should be taken into account. These rules are: presence online, monitor mentions, respond quickly, be transparent, be social, encourage dialogue, prepare for a crisis, address criticism, and finally customer service should be considered as a fundamental part of online reputation management (Floreddu et al., 2014; Holve, 2014; Benea, 2014; Coombs, 2007a). This proved what was found by Floreddu et al., (2014) as they concluded that business reputation is formed as a result of past actions and customer's direct experience and also influences others' expectations of the organization.

Engagement with Customer-Generated Reviews (CGRs):

One of the main challenges for tourism business is the rise of some review platforms which are used by millions of individuals and tourists. These platforms are one of the most significant developments of so-called Web 2.0 revolution. The second generation of web based services is characterized by having customer-generated reviews, which allow customers to share information and shaping business reputation by using a variety of tools in the networked environment (Chaves et al., 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Online CGRs have been described by Ngai et al., (2015) as a recent addition for managing reputation online. These new forms of communication started replacing traditional sources of information (Fotis et al., 2012).

Nowadays, there are hundreds of platforms where customers can voice their opinions, interact and share information with others (Rathonyi, 2013). The most dominant platforms for online reviews can be divided in two categories: Review Sites such as Trip Advisor, Google plus and Yelp and Social networking platforms such as Face book, Twitter, YouTube and MySpace (Sigala et al., 2016; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). They are the most common sites and tools for online reputation management especially in the travel industry.

Its common practice for customers to post online review after their experience to express their opinions and ideas. Many tourists exchange opinions, criticize, ask for help, request information, make suggestions, rate products and services and review their experiences. They are able to share all kinds of information and feelings about services, brands, providers and destinations (Hoster & Gottschalk, 2012; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). So; Review sites are thought of as credible sources of information for travellers.

On the other hand; the way organization responding and dealing with customers reviews affects travellers' decision making process, especially potential customer (Méndez et al., 2015; Milano et al., 2011). Engaging with CGRs within these unrestricted virtual communities allowing tourism organizations to manage and improve the success of their reputation online (Stepchenkova et al., 2007; Sigala et al, 2016). It refers to the reaction of the organization towards customers' reviews. Tourism organization has to welcome all kinds of feedback after customer's direct experience and must has treatment strategies to handle customers' problems and complaints (Holve, 2014).

Customer- generated reviews are important sources of information not only for travelers, but also for tourism organizations. They provide significant feedback regarding each component of provided services (Cox et al., 2007; Rathonyi, 2013). Listening and engaging with customers' reviews and acting immediately on their feedback could directly increase positive outcomes of business and achieve successful reputation online (Benea, 2014). Tourism services providers shouldn't wait until the crisis happen, they have to reply and handle negative comments and promote the positive ones. In addition; transparency is an important issue in ORM. It means if customer posts a negative comment on organization's site, deleting this comment or ignoring it will bring down the positive one. So; tourism organization should make sure that the problem is successfully addressed and talk about the procedures taken in public for everyone to see. It should react to customer's complaints without delay to prevent a crisis. This can be accomplished by apologizing, responding as fast as possible, promising to fix the problem, offer solutions and informing customers what actions have

been taken to address the situation (Holve, 2014). This creates a kind of credibility and reassurance towards the organization.

Accordingly, tourism organizations have to engage with customers' online reviews, analyze opinions, respond rapidly to their feedback, appreciate and thank positive reviews and try to handle negative ones. This ultimately leads to business success and improve organizational performance. As well; Benea (2014) demonstrated that tourism organizations ought to be remembering that ORM is not about perusing and reacting to everything posted about business on the web or attempting to downplay negative comments. It's about ensuring that all information available on organization's business properly sets customers' desires.

The impacts of ORM on the Tourism business:

The importance of the ORM for the travel industry has been discussed by various authors, illustrating different issues in managing reputation online in order to obtain strategic benefits for tourism business. Tourism organizations set ORM plan and interact with CGRs on review platforms in order to improve their brand reputation, increase sales and maximize their profitability (Buhalis & Jun, 2011).

Recommendations, comments, opinions, complaints, some tips and ideas expressed, can be very important for those tourism organizations who want to be innovative and creative (Lopes et al., 2014). Organization can form a clear picture of its business online; determine strength and weakness; and focus on where is the need for improvement.

ORM gives the opportunity for tourism organization to be closest to customers. This has positive impacts for tourist business (Dolle, 2014). Many organizations are able to interact directly and dynamically with customers at reduced costs (Coombs, 2015b). A research related to Coombs (2015b) showed that this new trend in managing business online facilitates regular two way communication between organizations and customers; generates a high credibility and mutual understanding. Customers liked to be listened and like to get responses to their feedback. They are searching for a place they can trust, where they know they are going to be treated well, that is truly what influenced them. This undoubtedly maintains a good online reputation for tourism business, ensure customer's loyalty and attract new customers which lead to business success.

Inversini et al., (2010) & Stoktosa et al., (2013) confirmed that one of the most important impacts of online reputation management in tourism business is the online conversations which taking place all the time. It makes tourism organization available to react directly at once if a conversation contains negative content.

Dickinger (2010); Hills & Cairncross (2011); Ye et al., (2009) argued that if organization analyze and manage CGRs sufficiently, various competitive benefits can be achieved for tourism business. Some of these benefits are: identifying customer's needs, expectations and satisfaction level; presenting their requirements; solving problems; facilitating solutions for potential problems that organization might face as a result of customers' attacks. In addition; it allows enhancement in some products or services and adoption of new policies or procedures in business (Loureiro & Kastenholz, 2011; Serra Cantallops & Salvi, 2014; Dolle, 2014; Cox et al., 2007).

In this context, some studies conducted in an attempt to demonstrate the impacts and the importance of online reputation management in the travel industry. It was found that there are few studies consider the practices of ORM and its impacts on tourism business, especially in Egypt. A set of researches (Inversini et al., 2010; Stoktosa et al., 2013; Miguéns et al., 2008) discussed one important aspect of online reputation management in terms of tourism destination. However; most studies in this area focus on online reputation management with regard to the influence of social media in the hotel industry (Proserpio & Zervas, 2016; Benea, 2014; Tuominen, 2011). Their results confirmed the significance of ORM and proved that management's reactions towards customers' feedback affect its online reputation. While the study of Coombs (2015b) discussed online reputation management during crisis. He presented some guidelines that organizations should be aware of and use when attempting to build a positive reputation with its stakeholders during crisis.

However; the previous discussion show that there has limited research exists on ORM in the travel industry. The majority of existing studies focused on specific point of ORM and didn't discuss its practices, benefits and impacts in the Egyptian travel agencies. So; this research has not been studied before.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

After demonstrating, through the previous literature review, the process of ORM and its value for the tourism business, it is important to enhancement the theoretical part by conducting the field study. A descriptive analytical methodology will be used for this study to describe related aspects of the phenomenon under study.

The aim of the research is to explore the importance of Online Reputation Management among Egyptians Travel Agencies and discusses some of its practices and benefits in the travel industry. In addition; to investigate how Egyptians travel agencies respond to CGRs on review sites and to what extent they are affected by customers' online reviews through different platforms. Along with a discussion of the effects of ORM on the tourism business.

Research Sample and Data Collection Techniques:

The current study is a type of quantitative research approach. A survey based on standardized questionnaire had been directed to a selected sample from the target population of this study which includes the Egyptian Travel Agencies. The study depends on the "survey" as a method within the quantitative methodology approach. An online questionnaire was designed as the survey instrument for collecting data. All the questionnaire items were measured on a five point Likert scale.

The questionnaire discusses two main ideas. Firstly; a set of questions evaluate the ORM practices and to what extent they are actually done in the targeted sample. Secondly; the other group of questions discover the influences and benefits of these practices on the tourism business. All of these questions on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 representing never while 5 representing always).

Besides that; some other questions aimed at exploring the opinions of respondents regarding ORM process and the importance of CGRs, on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree).

The population for this study contained 1167 Egyptian Travel Agencies category (A) where identified in Egypt by Egyptians Travel Agents Association (ETAA, 2016). In this study, random sample was used as one of the sampling techniques in order to achieve the aim of the research. Four hundred and sixty six (466) questionnaires were forwarded, among them 393 forms were collected and analyzed, with a response rate representing (33.7 %) from the total population.

The survey was conducted during January and February 2017 and focused on the Egyptian Travel Agencies in Cairo, Giza and Alexandria, where the majority of travel agents are located (ETAA, 2016). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze and compute the data. Frequency counts, percentage distributions and correlations were calculated and analyzed.

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire in this study, "Cranach's coefficient Alpha" was calculated to examine the internal consistency of the scale. The scale was found to be internally reliable, ($\alpha = 0.878$) which is considered an acceptable level of internal reliability as its safely and sufficiently higher than the cut point of (0.70) (Gay et al., 1992).

Results and Discussion:

The study illustrated that there are some practices related to ORM actually applied by Egyptian travel agencies, but haven't been done through a clear strategy or an announced plan. To clarify if respondents manage their content online or not, as the basic tactic of ORM, a set of questions evaluate this point. Table (1) shows that most of respondents (69%) updating and renovating business website frequently. In addition; the majority of the sample (78.1%) agreed that having a professional website is a necessary part of doing business in today's information age. After that; respondents were asked if they managed content on major review sites and social networking sites where customers post their comments, reviews and opinions about their experiences in order to achieve effective ORM. A high percentage of respondents (68.2%) showed that they actually doing that. This confirmed what was found by Lopes et al., (2014) that one of the most important tactics for ORM is managing content online and activating online presence through developing an innovative website, creating basic profiles on major review platforms and constructing online communities which is widely applied in the surveyed sample. This helps any travel agency to reach and engage with existing and potential customers.

Table (1) Managing Content Online

Indicator	Frequency	(%)
Regularly update website		
Never	7	1.78
Rarely	8	2.04
Neutral	63	16.03
Frequently	271	68.96
Always	44	11.19
Manage content on major review sites		
Never	4	1.02
Rarely	21	5.34
Neutral	41	10.43
Frequently	59	15.01
Always	268	68.19
Regularly monitor where and when business is being mentioned online		
Never	10	2.54
Rarely	12	3.05
Neutral	39	9.92
Frequently	302	76.84
Always	30	7.63

The results showed that there is a significant positive correlation between establishing online communities and enable customers' engagement (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.643, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). This means that creating online communities is a starting point to reach and engage with customers. From Aschoff et al., (2010) perspective, these communities allow engagement and interaction with customers, whether from the social side, which involves the creation of friendship or knowledge-based relationships that involve information exchange. This is important for any travel agency seeking to establish mutual relationships with customers and disseminate the right information about its business in order to build a good reputation on the long run. In addition to the above; the high percentage (79.1%) of the surveyed sample emphasized that presence continuously online on different review channels enables them to manage and control the success of their reputation online.

Besides; the results proved that there is a significant positive correlation between regularly monitoring where and when business is being mentioned online and gaining knowledge of how customers perceived business (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.587, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). Holve, 2014 clarified that monitoring social channels and review sites is very important in the travel industry to gain understanding of what customers like and dislike and how business is positioned online. Therefore; travel agency can know its ratings and rankings online through examining and monitoring social channels and review sites which can be a good indicator for its performance.

By asking the sample concerning the most important review sites on the social web from their point of view, the results in fig (1) showed that TripAdvisor and Facebook are the two most dominant platforms for online reviews at a rate (97%), (92.4%) of the sample in that order. Fig (1) also

reflects an increased ratios of some other sites such as Yelp which reached (69.8%) of the respondents, Google Places and Twitter at the same percentage (61%) for each of them, then YouTube (51%). These answers signify the importance of review platforms for the business of Egyptian travel agencies.

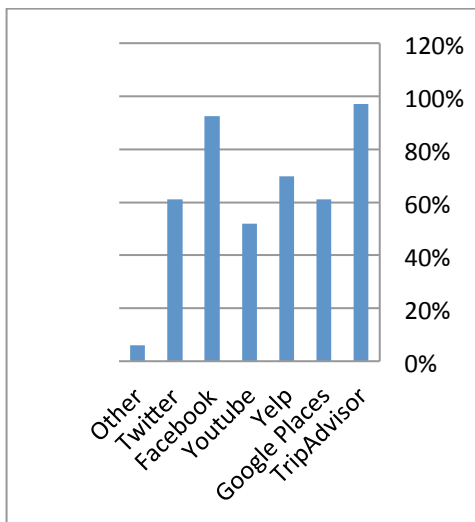


Figure 1: The most dominant platforms for customers' reviews

In addition; (77.3%) of respondents confirmed that they setting up online alerts such as TripAdvisor alert, Google alert, Facebook alert .. etc, to be notified when someone posts a review of our business even when the travel agency is not logged on to the social networks. In this regard; Miguéns et al (2008) clarified that these alerts enable travel agencies to access early to CGRs and respond quickly to their comments and queries as soon as they are written. Thus; the results showed a significant positive correlation between setting online alerts and react directly before someone else does (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.762, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). Rapid actions are required from the travel agency, especially in the networked environment, before giving anyone a chance to inflame the situation, spread negative publicity or raise doubts about its business online. It is worth mentioning that customers' feedback and opinions have become more credible than any other source of information through electronic word of mouth (EWOM), especially if those comments are negative (Lee et al. 2008). This contributes to the achievement of effective ORM.

Regarding the strategies and tactics towards CGRs, results showed that there are four strategies are ranked on the top as shown in fig (2). These are responding quickly to customers (86.3%), followed by answer to common questions (81.2%), then use feedback to guide decision (75.3%) and analyze feedback to determine action (74%).

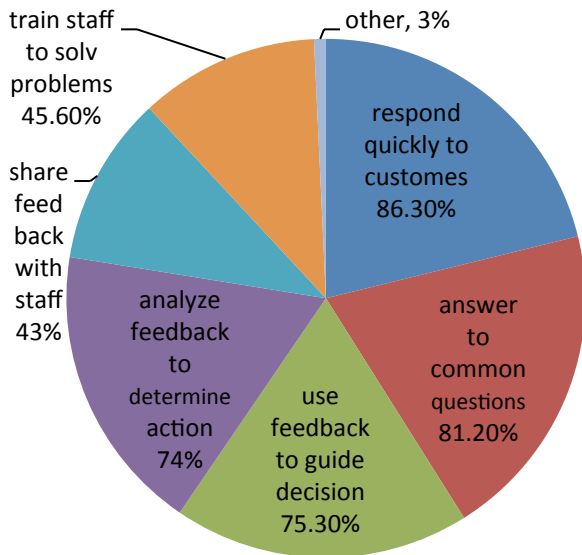


Figure 2: Some of travel agencies' strategies towards CGRs

Moreover; in terms of how Egyptians travel agencies engage and respond to CGRs on review platforms to manage their reputation online and to what extent their business affected by their strategies in this regard. To discover that, respondents were asked about the tactics they followed in engaging with CGRs as an essential part of ORM process and the benefits they have gained on their business as a result. **Analyzing the answers statistically represents the following results:**

Results showed that there is strong positive correlation between encourage dialogue and communication with customers through review platforms and attract new customers (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.864, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). It builds a positive online image of the travel agency. The way customers are treated via review channels attracts the attention of potential customers and influences their decisions (Wirtz et al., 2013). This attitude from the travel agency confirms for potential customers that customer's relationship is not limited to providing service but also extends to engage, communicate and respond to their reviews and requirements, which creates mutual understanding and long relationships with customers. The travel agency seeks to maintain a positive reputation online for its business, brand and services. This is not only for current customers who voice their opinions on review sites, but also for those people who will be judging its business on the way in which the reviews were received and handled.

Therefore, the respondents were questioned about replying immediately in the case of customer's attack. The outputs obtained from questionnaire reflect that there is a significant positive correlation between responding quickly during customer's attack and prevent crisis which may lead to reputational damage (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.752, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). The effect of customers' negative reviews could be relatively damaging to business's brand. Travel agency's direct response will defend its brand from any harmful hits that could cause a crisis threatens its online reputation.

Furthermore, according to some studies which have shown that the organization's action towards customer complaints significantly affects customer's behaviour towards the travel agency. So; the

questionnaire aimed at clarifying this point and examine this relation which had also a great impact on travel agency's online reputation.

In this regard, the results confirmed a significant positive relationship between apologize and find solution for customers' complaints and gaining customers trust and loyalty (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.713, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). This is consistent with what was found by Zheng et al. (2009) ; Kozak and Tasci (2006) that customers wish to address their complaints at once. So effective handling of customers' complaints can be an opportunity for travel agencies to provide services exceed customers' expectations. Dealing well with the angry customers and show empathy with their problems at once can be resulted in loyal customers. Thus it can be said that through engaging with CGRs on the social web, travel agencies could be able to determine non- satisfied customers and find out the reasons of their dissatisfaction.

On the other hand; there is a significant association between considering recommendations suggested by customers as a guide to some improvements and making changes in provided services (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.659, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000). The results reflect that there is a positive effect of suggestions recommended by customers and using them to make changes in provided services especially with negative content. Travel agencies need to realize customer's recommendations and considering them as opportunities to make changes in provided services in order to improve their performance and achieve a high level of customer satisfaction.

The outputs of the questionnaire revealed that there is important positive correlation between perform competition benchmarking and, upgrade services and improve position in tourism market. Through reviews sites travel agencies can recognize what is on the Internet about top competitors. As a result; they will be interested in developing and raising the quality of their services in order to improve their position in the tourism market (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.718, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000).

Besides that; the results reflected a positive correlation between considering customer- generated reviews as an important source of information and knowing customers' needs and expectations (Pearson Correlation coefficient=.837 &Sig. (2 tailed) =.000). Respondents indicated that when they engage with CGRs, they could identify customers needs, expectations, then present their requirements, as well as, they considered CGRs a source of determining strength and weakness in their business (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.734 &Sig. 2= .000). Moreover, for (61%) of the respondents, CGRs considered as a key performance indicator as shown in fig (3).

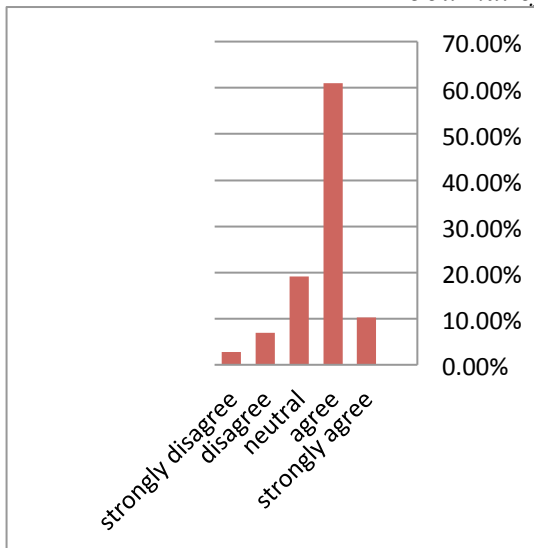


Figure 3: CGRs as a key performance indicator

It was demonstrated from the results that there is also a strong positive correlation between sharing positive reviews and strengthen reputation online (Pearson Correlation coefficient=.798 &Sig. (2 tailed) =.000). Customer feedback is not limited to negative comments, but there are also many customers tend to share their positive experiences. Sharing these positive reviews by travel agencies on different platforms and thanking customers contributes in strengthening and enhancing their online reputation.

Finally; to conclude all the above, Pearson's Correlation of the two main variables online reputation management and business success was conducted in table (2) to discover the impact of ORM practices and strategies followed by Egyptian travel agencies, which mentioned previously, on the success of their business. The results showed a significant positive correlation between managing reputation online especially customers' engagement and gaining positive impacts which leads to business success (Pearson Correlation coefficient =.869, Sig. (2-tailed) =.000).

Table (2) Pearson's Correlation of the variables Online Reputation Management and Business Success
Correlations

	ORM	Business Success
Pearson Correlation	1	.869**
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	393	393

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS

CONCLUSION

Recent web technology and internet applications have enabled travel agencies to manage their reputation and business online. Coombs (2015b) confirmed that review platforms are playing major part in organization's reputation management. The outcomes of the study showed that most of Egyptian travel agencies are increasingly rely on the internet especially review sites to build positive reputation and recognize what customers are saying about its brand, products and services in order to achieve business success.

The results confirmed that Egyptian travel agencies monitor, assess and try to control the perception of their reputation online to a great extent. It can be concluded that there are different practices followed by Egyptian travel agencies to achieve effective ORM such as manage content online, engage with customers... etc, but haven't been done through a clear policy or an obvious plan. The study also confirmed that CGRs have become an important source of information for most of the Egyptian travel agencies to know customers' requirements and points of strength and weakness, thus making corrective procedures on their products and services.

Therefore; service providers can no longer ignore the role of online review platforms not only for building positive online reputation but also for keeping it overtime. Furthermore, review sites are becoming increasingly popular and expected to be the primary online travel information sources.

So; tourism organizations have to face the threat of losing their reputation resulted from negative evaluations which can cause reputational damage (Horster and Gottschalk, 2012). Understanding the current customers, ensuring their loyalty, but more importantly predicting how to attract those tourists in future converting them from observers to buyers, will crucially impact how tourism organizations manage, develop and market their reputation online (Sotiriadis and Zyl, 2013; Cox et al., 2007).

It could be concluded that the challenge Egyptian travel agencies face in tourism sector is how to be integrated in the various review sites and ensuring that they have enough interaction with customers and tourists, as well as, reach to all online review data to make successful management of their online reputation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations should be considered:

- All actors in the tourism business have to be aware of the importance of ORM which affected business success.
- Each travel agency should have a clear plan for ORM and update it continuously according to business requirements.
- Travel agencies have to take advantage of their online presence through maintaining an active attendance on major reviews sites and popular social channels
- Tourism organizations should gain control of the situation, protect their valuable reputation from crisis and increase customers' trust which will result in achieving business success and gaining competitive advantage.
- Make sure that staff has a clear understanding of the ORM concept, strategy and its proper application.

- Staff must be trained to empower them how to deal with CGRs through effective organized programs.
- Ensuring enough interaction with customer-generated reviews must be considered to identify their needs, expectations and present their requirements.
- It is necessary to engage with CGRs and solve their complaints. This will maintain loyal customers with an obvious vision of their role in the marketing process and their contribution to the success of business.

LIMITATION:

The study showed that ORM in the travel industry is therefore a direction for future research. This can be done by evaluating each step of ORM at travel agencies separately, in order to get a clear picture of each stage. Also; an investigation of ORM practices in different regions in Egypt is required. As well; comparison between these regions should be done to find out the best application of ORM. On the other hand ORM during crisis is an important point of research especially with the frequent crises which affecting the tourism sector.

Also; it is helpful to make future studies to handle the concept of CGRs in the Egyptian travel industry, determining the appropriate policies and procedures for customer engagement. Besides that, different types of travel agencies should be investigated to discover whether they have ORM plan or not.

Additional future studies might discover the situation in the governmental tourist organizations such the Ministry of Tourism and the Egyptian Tourist Authority. Furthermore; investigate how to make cooperation between public and private tourism sector to design a successful plan for online reputation management at a destination level (DORM).

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The configuration of the tourism product significance through the print advertising communication technique: then and now

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Abstract

This paper aims at focusing on the importance of tourism product in postwar Greece - with emphasis on the 1960s and the current period - as it was depicted and promoted in the Greek Organization of Tourism posters and other sort of print advertisements.

The first part of the research will be based on an extensive survey the main objective of which is to record, through unexplored and rare sources of information (advertisements and articles in magazines and in newspapers of the time, posters, etc.), the course of the tourism print advertising in Greece during the multifaceted decade of the 1960s.

In the following part the author will attempt a similar research approach to the way the tourism product is being perceived as such in our days and how it is being displayed through the modern means of print advertising. However, the highly competitive predisposition of other types of advertising in tourism products such as T.V., radio, the Internet etc. seems to have claimed and got a big part of the overall current advertising pie. How much and in what way has it affected tourism print advertising? What is the meaning of tourism product print advertising in current Greece, compared to its significance in the 'golden' 1960s? These are issues that will be approached and analyzed in a methodical and argumentative way.

Keywords: tourism product, print advertising, 1960s, mass media, current period

INTRODUCTION

Under the difficult postwar circumstances, the charming decade of the 1960s began, initiating a period of even more important political, social and cultural upheaval during which the Greek economy grew rapidly, but, at the same time, was also structured according to the European and global economic developments. One of the main features of this period was the major political event – as we came to accept it – of the link between the country and the European Economic Community in an attempt to create a common market by signing the relevant treaty in 1962. The developmental strategy of the country was incorporated in five-year-development plans, organized by the central administration, with confusing and unclear, however, orientations. The average annual emigration, which absorbed the surplus of the labor force and favored the achievement of extremely high growth rates, exceeded the annual natural increase of population. Facilitations for the entry of large foreign private capitals and the expansion of consumption began to have a positive effect on the balance of payments, along with occurrences such as the expansion of maritime activity and the emigrants' remittances and of course the rise of tourism. In the early 1960s the tourism sector that began to grow dramatically, was characterized by small size tourism enterprises whose main objective was related to serving the immigrant flow towards abroad, but also a small part of tourists who travelled in Athens, some Aegean islands and Crete. However, very soon these companies began to turn into big travel agencies that made the big shift from simple touring, to mass tourism which was also the main form of tourism for the subsequent decades (Mavropetrou & Petridou, 2008).

On the other hand, media were considered to be as one of the strongest pillars of the postwar societies worldwide as they were the main – perhaps unique – traffickers of information. According to Bernard Cohen (1963), media were able to influence the consumer mass with regard to what were the important issues that should be considered, and this without indicating the way someone must think about them.

This is why advertising had already begun to play an important role within Greek society and State in general. Black and white or colored, printed or broadcasted, advertising managed to leave its trace in the collective memory of the century. It discreetly opened the door of the average urban Greek house to sneak in during the consumer years that followed, thus indicating the Greek house's aesthetics and needs. It wrapped in cellophane everyday life; it divided in installments dreams and plots; it attracted the eyes of children on shop windows; it became a part of reviews staged in theatres, a daily chatting in homes, schools and cafes, a picture and caption at stadiums, shops and bus stops (Arfara, 1997).

In combination with the tourism boom in the 1960s, advertising was probably the only type of the tourism product promotion that was limited almost exclusively in print form not only in magazines, newspapers and other publications of the time, but also in the form of Greek posters and leaflets made by the official state representative: the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO). Advertising became soon an important promotional tool of the then rising Greek tourism. But what is happening today? What is the role of tourism print advertising and how can it compete with the mighty mass media such as the internet, television or radio? Does it still retain its visual splendor or has it been conquered by the impersonal capitalist expansionism of the new advertising media?

THE TOURISM PRINT ADVERTISING IN THE 1960S

As the decade of the 1960s entered gently, without particularly acute changes and, as a natural continuation of the 1950s, the country continued to change - especially its big urban centers – since the residential blocks did not stop to emerge one after another. During that decade, both information and entertainment through the media were limited: although there was not even television, people enjoyed themselves by going to the cinema, or by reading light, popular magazines, while they were slowly recovering from the destructive civil war, looking for new visions (Tsoumas, 2015).



Figures 1, 2. ‘Olympic Airways’ black and white ads in an early 1960’s magazine (‘Vendetta’, 1961).

However, it was then that the vision of Greece as a new major touristic destination was completed and which had already started in the 1950s when the first travel agencies were created. But despite the fact that foreign tourism had already begun, most of them survived more with ticket sales to the aspiring Greek immigrants to the U.S., Australia, Canada and Germany. So it is reasonable the fact that most of the print advertisements of these agencies to be published in the popular literature of the era such as the ‘light’ readership magazines, addressed mainly to female consumers, but also in the newspapers of that period. Small sized, black and white ads with typical images from the most important transport media of the time, such as trains, but mostly ships such as the famous ‘Queen Frederick’ or the ‘Hellenes’ for Australia, as well as aircrafts with the then national carrier ‘Olympic Airways’ began to be the first massive advertising attack of these much promising travel agencies.

In this case, the use of a picture was much more narrative than a simple written text, as it had the power to promote, and perhaps, in some cases, even impose concepts with greater ease, without much analysis or deepening. However, in this case also, we can claim that the image used had the ability to bring the structural composition of a text, as this was the only way it could be interpreted. Thus, it seemed to have its specific ‘grammatical’ rules, its own ‘syntax scheme’, its own language, in general. The so-called virtual textuality seemed to require less difficult, but all the more existent, rules of analyzing and understanding; rules that commensurated with the linguistics of a spoken or written language (Ecco, 1988).

For instance, the first print advertisements for domestic tourism, which were growing more and more, started emerging slowly, too. These, usually simple textual ads without images, but with distinctively bold fonts, were placed on prominent pages of the then popular newspapers or magazines. Their aim was to attract the readers' interest in small domestic trips, day trips to the Argosaronikos bay by boat or even overnight stays in specific hotels in or around the large urban centers.

This type of advertising messages had less power in shaping the consumers' views and this is why most of the print advertisements on tourism products included the power of the colored image. All the above types of advertisements and many more to follow, were created by several advertising agencies and companies of the time such as GRAPHIS, SPOT, ALMA, DIDTS, DEKO, NEON HELLAS, Katzourakis - Karabot, Greca, ALEKTOR etc. most of which had just begun to systematically form themselves by hiring graphic designers, text editors and account specialists (Perikleous, 2002).¹

Impressive were the print ads designed exclusively for the tourism promotion of specific goods rather than services, which at the same time were magnificent ambassadors of the country abroad as they were associated with its touristic uniqueness. For example, the world-famous brandy firm 'Metaxa' during the 1960s gave special attention to the promotion of its products on a world-wide basis with a series of color print advertisements that could be described as folklore as they included, along with the advertised product, the images of touristic souvenirs of the time such as small *tsoliades*² and *shepherdesses* dolls, traditional musical instruments or even the Parthenon.

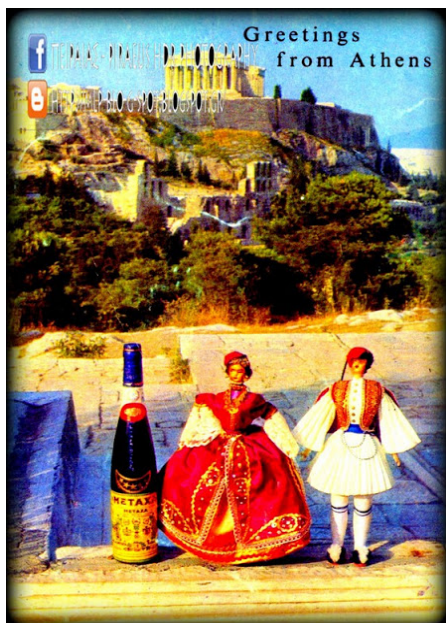


Figure 3. A 'Metaxa' Brandy ad promoting along with the actual traditional spirit the Greek touristic product of the 1960's.

¹ In 1966 the first institution of advertising was founded, the Association of Greek Advertising Agencies, having ten members. Its aim was to promote and elevate advertising as a function contributing to community service, but also to safeguard deontology and ethical behavior among all those who were involved in advertising, namely advertisers, advertising media and advertising companies.

² Tsoliades or Evzoni are selected soldiers of the Greek army. They took this name from the uniform they wore and which was officially established by King Otto of Greece in the 1830s; he, himself also wore this uniform in special occasions.

However, from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s, mass tourism had already begun to prevail: large hotel units as well as units of standardized tourism services emerged, while hotel staff was trained according to the new requirements of the time. In the years that followed management, marketing and informatics were also introduced. However, since the mid-1950s, another type of tourism products promotion had already begun to appear in the major tourism fairs in Europe and America, strongly supporting the tourist development of the 1960s: the famous tourist kiosks which under the auspices of the Greek National Tourism Organization were the first ambassadors of Greek tourism abroad.³

The promotion of the country's tourism profile was based on the showing of antiquities, holiday resorts and areas of natural beauty through posters, giant photographs, maps and copies of museum exhibits, promoting, at the same time, the Greek 'nation brand'. Tourist brochures were also distributed and information was provided on hotels and local transport. All these, of course, were because foreigners had to be convinced that Greece was a modern, vibrant and civilized country. For this reason, in the Greek kiosks were displayed photos and statistics of commercial Greek shipping activities, artistic and spiritual events, large industrial and public works, the Greek social welfare, etc. At the same time those kiosks served diplomatic purposes as the relations between Greece and the exhibition host country had to be strongly highlighted (Roussopoulos, 1955). In addition to the posters, on which we will comment below, touristic brochures were a new, interesting form of print advertising, as the multiplicity of their pages and small size made them particularly informative and easy to use. As new symbols of Greek tourism, the late 1950s and the early 1960s brochures featured distinctive images of the Greek culture, either in the form of photography or visual imagery combined with text in English, French or German, in quite sophisticated fonts that made their pluralistic writing even more intense. These brochures, whose creators were quite remarkable fine and graphic artists of the time, such as Fokion Dimitriadis, Giorgos Manousakis and Michalis Katzourakis, constituted the first 'portable advertising ambassadors' of the post-war Greek tourism in the country of every aspiring foreign visitor.

THE SPECIAL CASE OF THE TOURISM POSTER

The big advertising campaign of the Greek National Tourism Organization (GNTO) for the promotion of Greece abroad focused on another type of print ads that would promote the Greek tourism in the most ideal way: the tourist poster. Although the poster was an advertising means that first appeared in the middle of the 19th century and which was quickly established as a tool for communication, promotion and information, due to its multiplicity but also its wide dispersion qualities, it would seem to function well, too, as an information and influence means of mass consumption until the end of the twentieth century. In Greece, it appeared at the beginning of the 20th century and its peak coincided with the Greek National Tourism Organization establishment, that is, in the 1950s.

³ The participation of the architects Dimitris Moretis and Alexandras Paschalidis (later Moretis) in the creation of the tourist kiosks at the international tourism fairs was catalytic as those kiosks were treated for the first time as independent architectural works and not as simple, ephemeral constructions.

At the time, it was a useful advertising tool, the importance of which seemed to have been understood early enough by those who were responsible for the promotion of Greek tourism, and as a result, thousands of tourist posters have been issued to serve this purpose, since then. It definitely constituted the most characteristic and still effective means of communication of the Greek national brand on the international tourism scene, when Greece emerged as an unexplored and much promising worldwide tourism destination (Koutsovassili, 2013).

In these posters, Greece, despite its major political problems of the time, emerged as the country of carelessness, warmth, sun and sea. In particular, the focus of this period was always in conjunction with the natural beauty of the island or coastal areas, travel within the country, cultural or sporting activities, such as sailing, as well as historical monuments. Of particular significance were the posters that were made in the framework of the Athens Festival and the performances that were presented at that time, such as 'Norma' with Maria Callas in 1960 and 'Medea' in 1961, accordingly. These works can be described as unique not only in the Greek poster history, but in Greek modern culture history, too, as they depicted not only important artistic events, but also a particularly prolific period of high artistic importance in the history of the Theatre of Herodes Atticus and the Ancient Theater of Epidauros, too (Kostiani, 2016). All the above stereotypes would constitute until the end of the 20th century a large part of the average Greek's collective consciousness and thus an integral part of their national identity. The attempt to represent Greece through graphic design with modern, abstract, flat compositions and detailed, color photographs which rendered photography as the dominant textual genre of the poster, was particularly impressive. In addition, posters of the 1960s were primarily narrative, without the conceptual ones being absent (Vlami and Dittmar, 2012).



Figures 4, 5. Two characteristic tourism posters designed by Freedy Karabot in 1961 (left) and Michalis Katzourakis in 1963 (right).

Many of the new compositional and technical changes were due to the painter Michalis Katzourakis who, together with Freddy Karabot, created the K & K company, and while being visual communication experts they worked as art consultants for the Greek National Tourism Organization from 1959 to 1967 (Kaltaki, 2014). With their help and expertise, the poster was no longer a simple painting work lithographically transferred into a piece of tin, as it was in the 1950s, but a new, effective way of graphic art which, based on the principles of visual communication, supported the proper promotion of the valuable tourism product.⁴

MARKETING AND NEW MEANS OF TOURISM ADVERTISING

Approximately fifty years after the 1960s, Greek tourism has become an important economic and cultural value, and it is now considered to have a credible contribution to the growth of the gross national product. In this context, however, it should be noted that the way of dealing with and managing the tourism product has changed radically since, as it now comes under the uniform strategy of *tourism marketing*. According to this, the new communication tools for the promotion of the tourism product, which constitutes an amalgam of goods and services, are not limited to print advertising, but extend to areas such as the Internet, the radio and the television advertising, public relations etc. (Kapoor, Paul & Halder, 2011). The ability to buy space in the media (press, radio, television, the Internet, etc.) which can be used in order to convey the desired commercial message, gives to the advertised tourist company the absolute control over the content of the campaign while, on the other hand, it is estimated that the average consumer is able to receive thousands of advertising messages on a daily basis (Avraham & Eran, 2008). More specifically, with regard to the Internet, which is today the most modern way of informing, communicating, promoting and even selling products and services, the prospective clients have unlimited possibilities for direct information about destinations as well as for choices on travel, accommodation, leisure activities, holiday packages, either through online advertising or through special tourism sites. This feature offers flexibility, multiple options but also the ability to compare prices and find bargains, while enables users to have in real-time integrated information, which is constantly updated for certain destinations services (Kokkossis, Tsartas, Gkrimba, 2011). At the same time, the website can 'educate' the non-traveling public and attract new friends who are willing to spread the message to their beloved persons by enhancing 'oral' advertising.

Television, one of the most developed advertising media⁵ throughout the business world, has been popular both for entertainment and information. Its wide range of broadcasting and the large number of viewers it attracts constitute its important advantages and render the tourism product advertising not only immediate but also effective, despite being costly.

⁴ Famous painters of that period such as Spyros Vassiliou, Panagiotis Tetsis, Giorgos Manousakis, Louiza Montesantou, Elli Orphanou and even George Vakirtzis, who, although known for his exquisite cinema giant posters, had made a number of remarkable works for the touristic promotion of the country, responded to the then invitation of the Greek National Tourism Organization to promote Greece abroad, winning the impressions of experts outside Greece.

⁵ Its rapid growth in Greece has been observed over the past twenty years with the entry of many private TV channels. Two-thirds of the advertising spots last 60 seconds, although a 10-second spot is capable of conveying a message.

Radio advertising, perhaps the most international and one of the oldest of this kind, now technologically advanced, still plays an important role in promoting the tourism product with clever and effectual spots and commercials (Arens, Arens, Weigold & Schaefer, 2011).

THE PRINT ADVERTISING TODAY

According to marketing, advertising spreading to different types of media (information, sports, social, professional, etc.) to maximize target audience coverage, was expected to have an impact on the importance of print advertising, which nowadays is restricted to specific types of application. On the new terms of tourist offer basis, print advertising aims at the promotion of Greek culture through many activities related to history, architecture, gastronomy, conferences, agro-tourism, festivals, as well as the classical archaeological monuments, modern and traditional arts, as well as creative industries such as fashion (SETE, 2010).

Since tourism has also been divided into two very important sections, domestic and foreign, print advertising follows this division, creating new ways of promoting the tourism product. As regards the advertising which addresses to the foreign clientele, we can detect a number of new but also many old applications adapted to the contemporary cultural, aesthetic and technological data. At the same time, we can add that the private initiative is very much in competition with the public interest in tourism, as, except the Greek National Tourism Organization, there are many private companies, large travel agencies, or even well organized hotel units that are interested in the modern tourism product. Thus we will observe that the traditional poster is still a classic form of tourism advertising, but not of the same importance as in the 1960s, and of course in a quite smaller number of prints. We will find it in many tourist offices in Greece and abroad, in several exhibitions of tourism products (objects or services), hotels, public or purely touristic areas. As far as Greece is concerned as a general holiday destination, apart from the well-known, classic poster themes, we will also observe that the textual genre that prevails in most of them is photography; we will also notice an important development in the actual text itself which usually consists of a phrase or slogan which accompanies the keyword 'Greece' and serves to the conveyance of additional messages beyond the obvious one.

The accompanying text is usually written in English, and its placement on the poster is not limited or predetermined. However, despite the fact that the photographs used are all colorful, detailed with great perspective and intense brightness, the dominant color is blue. Finally, most posters of this kind are of narrative character and keep distance between the viewers and the depicted objects, humans or places, some of which seem to prevail (Koutsovassili, 2013). As regards the posters which focus on specific forms of tourism such as gastronomic tourism or agro-tourism, the photographic material used seems to have the same value as the accompanying text which, in addition to being far more extensive, may be in more than one language. The same is seen on domestic tourism posters, which are usually commissioned either by public bodies such as municipalities, counties and the Ministry of Tourism (social tourism), but also the private initiative. In this case the dominance of the image in the form of photography is evident, and in all cases the text is written in Greek, except from a few exceptions. In both cases, however, particular websites addresses are obviously pointed out on the posters, prompting readers to use them for further information.



Figure 6. A modern tourism poster based on photography, bearing a minimal text message and the website address of the Greek National Tourism Organisation.

Tourism product ads are also common in the everyday press, such as newspapers, magazines of general or special interest magazines and journals such as those which concern tourism or others related to agro-tourism, politics, art and gastronomy. Most of the times they are accompanied by special tributes or articles about Greece in general or about some of its regions. The way they are presented is quite relevant to the way the modern tourism poster is shaped, but in a better structured, smaller and possibly more effective form.



Figure 7. Contemporary Greek tourism ads in foreign magazines seem to be both impressive and effective.

Brochures are still an important form of the contemporary print advertising as they are useful pamphlets that highlight, inter alia, not only the entrepreneurs' contact with the consumers, but also the high profile of each enterprise, such as hotel units, restaurants, travel agencies etc. The modern brochures are carefully designed, usually with colorful photographic material, an impressive cover and contain useful instructions and information.

Tourists and travel guides still constitute another modern and effective way of print advertising, though many of them have been replaced with many interesting and yet handy internet applications which can now be easily accessed through tablets and mobile phones, except laptops and desktops. Apart from the well-known, exclusively professional tourist guides, special advertising guides have been published in recent years by various international companies (Gorgolitsas, 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

Post-war print tourism advertising, especially that of the 1960s, when Greek tourism began to shape its current successful physiognomy, played an important role. The lack of other effective media that could combine textual information with the power of image made print advertising the main means through which Greek tourism was promoted both abroad and within the country. The posters, brochures, advertisements in magazines and newspapers of the era were the ideal ambassadors of the country's cultural and morphological values, shaping its high tourist potential.

However, in the modern times of globalization and technological development, the means available to promote the tourist destination create new data which have also great potential. In their everyday lives, modern consumers can choose between multiple destinations, different types of tourism products, as well as multiple ways of transport and stay as now there are plenty of choices. Tourism advertising has, since a long time, stopped being a mere combination of image and text, as concepts such as motion, sound and media speed can now be combined and create a synergy of senses, resulting in the formation of a typically influential consumer-based virtual reality (Lagerkvist, 2008).

More precisely, by studying the way the Internet and users behave, we can notice that consumers constitute an active body. There are many options available on the screen (categories of a menu, references in a text, etc.) and thus they can freely choose both the tourism product to buy and the time they will spend on this purchase.

Web publishing is much easier than the print publishing, in many cases cheaper and the material that the public has at its disposal is vastly larger. A natural result of this multitude of information is the greater specialization and the consumers fragmentation into several, but also smaller and of more specialized interest groups (Epitedios, 2002).

Contemporary print tourism advertising, although it has lost a great deal of its glamour and its influential value in shaping the viewpoint of a much larger tourism product clientele, still claims a bit of this new order. However, many times it is deliberately combined with the contemporary media whose competitiveness is no longer negotiable.

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The Incentives and the Degree of Satisfaction of the Spectators of the Athens Classic Marathon 2015 and 2016

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, tourism and sport are often characterized as “industries” due to the large number of people interested in them, as well as the increased revenues of the visitors’ host countries. The last few years, the increased touristic flow is accompanied by an increased interest in sport as a tourism product. The so-called “sport tourism” is currently being studied by the sport and the tourism industry, as well as the scientific community.

The Authentic Athens Marathon is one of the many sport events organized in the Greek capital. The game is accompanied by shorter races, the 5km and the 10km races, which attract both the athletes’ and the amateur athletes’ interest. From the perspective of the state and the Athens’ bodies, the organization’s purpose is to establish the Authentic Marathon as a world sport event, with the participation of runners and visitors from all over the world. Furthermore, through this organization,

efforts are also being made in order to promote Athens and Greece and to present them as international sport destinations.

The present quantitative study was conducted in order to investigate the incentives and the degree of satisfaction of the spectators of the Athens Marathon. For the needs of the study structured questionnaires of 17 closed ended questions were distributed during the 2015 and 2016 games.

The spectators stated that they attended the games because some of their friends or relatives participated in them, while a number of them stated that they attended the games due to their love and interest in sport. The spectators answered that they were very satisfied by the organization, the information given and the events that took place during the games. However, the findings suggest that, despite the competent bodies' efforts, Greece and Athens have not managed to be established in the consciousness of the public as sport destinations and that the Marathon does not attract a large number of foreign visitors.

Further research is needed in order to investigate both the extent to which the visitors are informed through the media and the incentives and the requests of the races' spectators and, mainly, of the foreign visitors.

Key Words: Sport, Tourism, Athens Authentic Marathon.

1. TOURISM AND SPORT

Tourism is a multi-dimensional social-economic phenomenon which, from antiquity to the present day, has always been and still is related to the leisure time. Tourists spend their leisure time traveling away from their place of residence and work, so that they will be able to experience the change. The reasons why a person decides to travel vary, according to the incentives and the purpose, for example, cultural understanding, education, recreation, sport, etc.

According to Edwards (1973), the concept of "sport" has its roots in "disport", which means to distract or to divert and refers to the overriding importance of sport as an activity that distracts the individuals' attention from the everyday austerity and its pressures.

Of course, this concept has nowadays changed. Sport can be considered from many different points of view and perspectives. So, sport is viewed as a game (Hart and Birell, 1981) or a diversion from the daily routine, as leisure or recreation, as a pleasant way to spend time in open areas, for example, hunting, fishing, skiing or hiking (Zeigler, 1984).

Nowadays, sport, just like tourism, is supposed to be one of the most large-scale social phenomena. At the same time, both activities are considered important "industries", since they both attract large groups of people at a constantly high pace. Lately, the interest of the sport and the tourism industry, as well as that of the scientific community in sport as a tourism product has substantially increased. As a matter of fact, the scientific community has recognized the latter as an area of special academic interest (Standeven & De Knop, 1999). Thus, the so-called "sport tourism" emerges as a tourism activity.

2. CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION

Olivova (1984) considers that the points that these two activities share in common are increasing rapidly. As a matter of fact, the term “sport tourism” has been invented in order to easily understand the use of sport as a tourism phenomenon.

Pigeassou (2004:287) mentions that the so-called “sport tourism” is a social and economic activity located between sport and tourism.

A large number of philosophical, entrepreneurial, communication, as well as social developments have contributed to the engagement between sport and tourism. These developments are focused on the following:

- a) “Sport tourism” presents increased popularity, since it has been based on, promoted through and is well-documented by big sport events of global dimension (Blatiz, 1991, In Kurtzman, 2001:104), like the Olympic Games, the World Championships, the Marathons and other, similar events.
- b) “Sport tourism” is a mass event, supported by the promotion through the media of the worship of the “athletes-heroes” and their “stalwartness” (Kurtzman et al., 1993).
- c) In the western societies, health promotion through physical activity for people of all ages has renewed the interest in the participation in a large variety of sport events (Bhatiz, 1991; Pigeassou, 1997:26) and, subsequently, an important increase in the organized offer of sport events is being observed at global level.
- d) Gradually, the importance of both sport and tourism in the promotion of the local, national and international friendship, as well as of the understanding among individuals, groups and communities, is being understood (Kurtzman et al. 1993).

Technological developments contribute to the development of sport tourism (Gammon & Robinson, 1997), while the same applies to the development of the means of transport, since they allow the athletes’ and spectators’ transport.

Sport tourism could be classified into two large categories based on the presence or the absence of active participation in the sport activities. Specifically, there is a distinction between the sport events’ spectators and the active participants in a sport organization. These distinctions have occasionally been subjected to intensive academic dialogue (Hall, 1992; Green, Chalip and Verden, 1998; Gibson, 1998; De Knop, 1990; Nogawa, Yamguchi & Hagi, 1996).

Another distinction could be made based on whether the participant is a sport professional or not. In this case, a big issue rises about whether a sport professional may be considered a tourist, since the transport lacks basic tourism elements, like the incentive, which is the recreation, the free choice and free time (Μυλωνόπουλος, 2016:27).

Gibson (1998) made an attempt to categorize sport tourism based on the activities carried out during these types of tourists’ vacations. Specifically, she suggests the following sport tourism categories: a) Sport and exercise tourism, which refers to tourists who want to combine exercise with sport during their vacations. Such examples are the tourists who visit destinations that allow them to combine their vacations with sport activities, like swimming, sailing, climbing, etc. As a matter of fact, it should be stressed that, for many tourists of this category, the participation in a sport event might be of greater importance in comparison to the destination that hosts the event. b)

Sport events tourism, when the tourists choose destinations that also provide sport services. In this case, the sport events (like the Olympic Games, the Football World Cup, the Marathons, etc.) are the basic incentive regarding the growth of tourist flows to certain destinations. c) Cultural sport tourism. This is a type of activity expressed through the visitors' interest to be in sport places of great historic importance and cultural interest, in places that host popular sports, in well-known emporia selling sports equipment or in meeting famous sports personalities (Γκιόσος et al., 2000:83). The archaeological site of Ancient Olympia, large stadiums having hosted the Olympic Games, various football fields, etc. are all integrated into this category.

Kurtzman and Zauhar (1997) have made an attempt to solve the sport tourism definition problems through five basic products, namely the sport tourism attractions, the sport tourism cruises, the sport tourism resorts, the sport tourism tours and the sport tourism events.

Gibson (1998) divides sport tourism into the following three large categories: the attendance of a sport event, the visit to a sport location and the active participation in a sport event.

Gammon & Robinson (1997) mention two distinctions, "sport tourism" and "tourism athletics". At the same time, they describe a "narrower" and a "broader" definition for each concept. As long as it concerns "sport tourism", the transport's main incentive is the sport activity, while the tourism element just reinforces the total experience. The individuals participate in sport activities at random or on an incidental basis during their vacations. On the contrary, "tourism athletics" refers to individuals who either attend or participate in a competitive sport event. In this case, the travel is the transport's main incentive, while sport functions as the transport's secondary incentive.

According to Γκιόσος et al. (2000:82) these tourists are divided into two subcategories, the one of the spectators and the other of the participants (athletes, organizers, etc.). The two subcategories' individuals substantially differ in their consumer characteristics and the length of stay at their destination.

According to the travel classification adopted by the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations, the sport activities categories include winter sports, watersports, recreational diving, major sport events (like, for example, the Olympic Games and the World Cup), hunting, fishing (as a recreational activity), safari and golf.

3. ANCIENT GREECE AND SPORT

Greece has been the cradle of civilization and sport. Gardiner (1930:1) supports the thesis that "the history of the athletics in the ancient world is the history of the athletics in ancient Greece, due to the fact that the Greek nation was the only athletic nation in the ancient world". Since antiquity, various games had been organized in Greece, in order to honor the gods, like, for example, the Panathenaic games, which were organized every four years in order to honor goddess Athena, the Isthmian games, which were organized in order to honor god Poseidon, the Pythian games, which were organized in order to honor god Apollo, the Heraia festival, which was organized in order to honor goddess Hera, the Asclepieia festival, which was organized in order to

honor Asclepius and the Nemean games, which were organized in order to honor god Zeus. The games and festivals included athletic, as well as poetry, music, drama and other contests.

However, the oldest and most important of all the games were the Olympic Games, which were held every four years at Olympia in honor of Zeus, the father of all gods. Pausanias mentions that "... Hercules..., matched his brothers in a running race and crowned the winner with a branch of wild olive. Thus, on this occasion, Hercules has the reputation of being the first to have held the games and to have called them Olympic" (Παυσανίας, *V*, 7.7-9).

The games were held at the Stadium and the Hippodrome, in front of thousands of spectators from all over the known ancient Greek world. The winners' award was a branch of wild olive, called laurel, while the winners were honored by their home countries. Finally, during the games, ceasefire was taking effect.

4. THE ATHENS AUTHENTIC MARATHON

The Marathon route (42,195m) is one of the most important races in the modern Olympic Games. It was integrated into the Olympic program in 1896, after Michel Breal, a Sorbonne professor and friend of the French baron Pierre de Coubertin, had suggested it. Pierre de Coubertin was the founder of the International Olympic Committee and is regarded as the modern Olympic Games' reviver and father. The race was established in memory of the heroic accomplishment of the hemerodromos-herald⁶ who had brought the Athenians the news regarding their victory against the Persians (490 B.C.).

The participation in the Marathon is, probably, the most important challenge that runners face. As a matter of fact, Marathon attracts the most participants from all over the world. For a large number of people, the participation in a Marathon is a life goal, even if it is going to happen once and regardless of the time needed to complete the course. In fact, 95% of the participants need more than two hours in order to complete the 42,195m course. Marathon, apart from being a major sport event, is also an important social event for the host city/country, since thousands of people; both athletes and spectators visit the area in order to watch the competition. The benefits of the major sport event's organization for the host country include the attraction of high income tourists and the creation of a permanent tourism clientele. At the same time, high revenues from the transportation, the accommodation, the nutrition, the athletes' workout, the buys, the museum visits, etc. are being recorded.

Marathons are being organized all over the world. The biggest are those of New York (in 2016 51.264 persons passed the finish line), Chicago, Paris, London and Berlin (HPRC, 2016). For example, it should be mentioned that 712 Marathons were organized in the USA and 59 in Canada during 2016 (Marathon Statistics, 2016).

Of course, the top Marathon is the "classic" authentic Marathon, which is being held every November in Athens. The athletes follow the authentic route, which starts from the area of Marathon and ends at the Kallimarmaro Stadium of Athens. The whole distance is 42.195km. Since 1972 the Athens classic Marathon is being held under the auspices of the Greek National Tourism

⁶ In ancient Greece, the messages related to the war were undertaken by the hemerodromes or heralds, who were very quickly covering long distances using arduous roads, armed and fully equipped (Γιαννάκης, 2016).

Organization and the Hellenic Athletics Federation. It took its current form in 1983 and its numbering began then. It is included in the Gold Marathons of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF⁷).

At the same time, apart from the Marathon, 5km and 10km races, children's races, dynamic gait and a 1,200m race within the framework of the Special Olympics are also being organized.

The number of the athletes who participate in the races that accompany the Athens Classic (later Authentic) Marathon is constantly increasing. According to the available statistical data, 16,000 athletes were enrolled in the 33rd Athens Marathon in 2015, while 18,000 athletes were enrolled in the 34th Athens Marathon in 2016. In general, in the 2016 races, there were 50,000 registration forms regarding all the sports.

According to the studies held by the Marketing Agency of the Hellenic Association of Amateur Athletes, the contenders are accompanied by a mean of 1.50 persons. The athletes and their attendants stay in Greece for a mean of 5 days (mainly in Athens) and they spend on accommodation, nutrition, buys, museum visits, etc. a mean of €1,500 (the sum refers to 2.50 persons). According to the calculations made, the revenues for Athens amount to €11 million (Παπαποστόλου, 2015).

The Marathon becomes popular through the operation of websites, by its promotion through the social networks, television and radio, as well as with the use of posters and leaflets⁸.

5. THE RESEARCH

The present study was held in order to identify the spectators' incentives regarding the Athens Marathon attendance. Another objective was the investigation of the spectators' degree of satisfaction regarding the races' organization. Within this study, a structured questionnaire of 17 questions was distributed, during the 2015 (the 8th of November) and the 2016 (the 13th of November) races' days.

A total of 188 questionnaires were completed by the races' spectators. The questionnaires were distributed to a random sample of people willing to spend the time needed to complete them, during the races' days, from 08.00 to 20.00. The questionnaires were written both in Greek and in English.

Of the 188 spectators who had agreed to complete the questionnaires, 109 (57.90% of the respondents) were women and 79 (42.10%) were men. Furthermore, 16 (8.50%) of the people asked were aged between 12 and 18 years old, 60 (31.90%) were aged between 19 and 30 years old, 39 (20.80%) were aged between 31 and 40 years old, 36 (19.10%) were aged between 41 and 50 years old, 24 (12.80%) were aged between 51 and 60 years old, 7 (3.70%) were aged between 61 and 70 years old, while 6 persons (3.20%) were older than 70 years old.

As long as it concerns the spectators' occupation, the results are the following. Thirty-two of them (17.00%) were civil servants, 44 (23.40%) were employed in the private sector, 15 (8.00%)

⁷ Κλασικός Μαραθώνιος Αθηνών: Ο δρόμος της δόξας! [The Athens Classic Marathon: The road of glory!] In <http://www.visitmarathon.gr/index.php/el/marathon-race/klasikos-marathonios-athinon>

⁸ Μαραθώνιος Αθήνας [The Athens Marathon] (2016). In <http://www.athensauthenticmarathon.gr/site/index.php/el/news-gr/media-archives-gr>

were self-employed, 15 (12.80%) were unemployed, 18 (9.60%) were pensioners, 18 (9.60%) were housewives, 42 (22.30%) were pupils/students and, finally, 10 of them (5.30%) mentioned that they were occupied in something else, without being more specific.

Regarding the spectators' level of education, the findings are the following. Of the 188 spectators who had agreed to complete the questionnaires, 20 (10.60%) had completed compulsory education, 51 (27.20%) were secondary education graduates, 91 (48.40%) were tertiary education graduates, while 26 (13.80%) held a Master Degree or a PhD.

Regarding the spectators' origin, 166 (88.30%) of them had Greek nationality, 5 (2.70%) had come from Italy, while 17 (9.00%) indicated various places as country of origin, like the Netherlands, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Poland, etc. These findings clearly indicate that, despite the efforts made, the Athens Marathon does not attract foreign spectators, the way that other Marathons being held abroad do.

The largest proportion of the spectators who stated that they were not Athens citizens, namely 49.30% of them (34 persons) mentioned that they had visited Athens in order to attend the races, 13.00% of them (9 persons) had visited Athens on business, 31.90% of them (22 persons) had visited Athens for leisure purposes and 2.90% of them (2 persons) answered that they were found in Athens for other reasons. Of the 188 spectators who had agreed to complete the questionnaire, 31.90% (44 persons) answered that they would stay in Athens just to watch the races, while 18.10% (25 persons) answered that they would stay in Athens for 2 to 3 days. This finding fails to agree with the data given by the Hellenic Association of Amateur Athletes, that mention that the athletes and their attendants stay in Greece for a mean of 5 days.

Of the 188 spectators who had agreed to answer the questionnaire, 31.90% (60 persons) mentioned that they watched the races with friends, 21.30% (40 persons) with their spouse/partner, 14.40% (27 persons) with other members of their family, 13.80% (26 persons) alone and 13.80% (26 persons) with their spouse/partner and their children.

Regarding the way that the spectators were informed about the races, 41.50% (78 persons) mentioned that they were informed through the internet, 33.50% (63 persons) were informed by relatives and friends and 13.80% (26 persons) were informed through television. Finally, only a few persons mentioned that they were informed through the print and other media.

As long as it concerns the running routes, 135 persons (69.70%) answered that they watched the Marathon, 50 persons (26.60%) watched the 10Km race, 45 persons (23.90%) watched the morning 5Km race, 29 persons (15.50%) watched the children's races, 19 persons (10.00%) watched the evening 5Km race, 15 persons (7.90%) watched the Special Olympics races, while 12 persons (6.40%) watched the dynamic gait.

Of great importance is the finding that of the 188 spectators asked, 37.30% (70 persons) mentioned that they watched the races due to the fact that a friend or a relative was participating in them, 23.90% (38 persons) mentioned that they watched the races because they love sports and they are interested in them, while only 6.40% (12 persons) watched the races in order to satisfy their curiosity. The rest of the spectators asked mentioned that they watched the games for other reasons, like, for example, because they were just "passing through".

Of the 188 spectators who answered the questionnaire, 46,8% (88 persons) mentioned that they had watched similar races in the past, while 93.6% (176 persons) stated that they would like similar races to be organized more often. As a matter of fact, 63.80% (120 persons) mentioned that they would gladly participate in similar organizations as volunteers.

The answers given by the spectators to the questions regarding the degree of satisfaction obtained from the organization and the other events were as follows:

Table 1. Degree of satisfaction obtained from the Athens Marathon

	Very satisfied		Satisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Dissatisfied		Very dissatisfied		Prefer not to		M/V	
	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%
Organization	93	49.70	59	31.40	17	9.00	10	5.20	8	4.20	1	0.50	0	
Accessibility	72	38.30	48	26.00	34	18.10	23	12.20	9	4.90	1	0.50	11	00.50
Information about the races	76	40.40	52	27.70	35	18.60	9	4.80	11	5.80	5	2.70	11	00.50
Events	58	30.90	56	29.80	35	18.60	22	11.70	6	3.20	11	5.80	0	
Information about Athens	55	29.20	54	28.70	43	23.00	15	8.00	9	4.80	11	5.80	0	
Cultural attractions	68	36.30	49	26.10	28	15.00	13	7.00	17	9.00	12	6.50	11	00.50

It should be noted that the respondents appeared very satisfied by the organization (49.70%), the accessibility of the races' area (38.30%), the way they were informed about the races (40.40%), the events that took place in order to accompany the races (30.90% of the respondents were very satisfied and 29.80% of them were satisfied), the information provided about Athens (29.20% of the respondents were very satisfied and 28.70% of them were satisfied) and the cultural attractions (36.30%).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the present study indicate that, despite the competent bodies' efforts, Athens, even though it is the Marathon's city of origin, has not been established in the tourists'

consciousness and does not attract a large number of foreign visitors to watch the races. As a matter of fact, the majority of the spectators (41.50%) were informed about the event through the internet, while 33.50% of them were informed by relatives and friends. Finally, the contribution of television and other forms of promotion was only small.

The study has also shown that 37.30% of the spectators watched the races due to the fact that a friend or a member of their family participated in them, while 47.80% of the respondents watched the races because they love sports and they are interested in them. This percentage, combined with the spectators' percentage who stated that they had visited Athens in order to watch the races, allows the assumption that it refers to sport tourists, namely persons who travel in order to watch sport events combined with recreation.

Further research is needed in order to investigate the extent to which the visitors are informed through the media. Additionally, further research is needed so that the incentives of the races' spectators, mainly of the foreign visitors, will be identified, in order to be able to approach these groups of people and to design appropriate tourist packages for the successful promotion of athletic events in the future.

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Factors and motivations influencing the formation of marketing strategic alliance: Evidence from independent hotels in Egypt

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ABSTRACT

Inter-firm strategic alliance has undergone immense growth in both domestic and international settings in various industries. To date researches pertaining to these alliances have scoped conventional theories that mostly involve transaction cost analysis from a general perspective. This paper focuses on the study of strategic alliance motives that shift the balance of lodging metrics to independent hotels. It explores marketing strategic alliance formation that stems from resource sharing by independent hotels in Egypt to sustain economic growth and remain competitive with larger rivals.

Specifically, the study explores how the formation of marketing strategic alliances between independent hotels in Egypt improves their service levels, enable them to enter new markets, share marketing experience and resources, and gain competitive advantage. The study also examines the relationship among seven success factors for marketing strategic alliances. A sequential mixed-methods strategy involved collecting data using qualitative and quantitative research techniques within two phases, whereby the data collected in phase one contribute to the development of research hypotheses and the selection of prospective participants who can best provide data in phase two.

Thirty-five qualitative semi-structured interviews with hotel key personnel involved in the operational aspects of independent hotels were conducted. The analysis of these entirely open-ended interviews generated interesting insight into the motivations and barriers of joining a hotel marketing strategic alliance. Further, quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire with a selected sample of independent hotel employees in four major tourist destinations in Egypt. Descriptive statistics were primarily used to describe survey responses and summarize results with respect to hypotheses. Means, medians, standard deviations, and confidence intervals are reported where appropriate. Otherwise, simple frequencies were tabulated and summarized for other measures. Spearman's rank correlations were used to assess interrelationships between ratings of importance for the dimensions of marketing strategic alliance formation.

Major findings of this study suggest that hoteliers are highly motivated to join marketing strategic alliances and that they have positive attitudes towards them. However, data also reveal that hoteliers

in this sample lack some knowledge about their own strategic alliances. Respondents rated all the dimensions measured on the survey very highly.

Key Words: Marketing strategic alliance, independent hotels, Egypt

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's troubled economies characterized by intense competitive environment, many independent hotels are facing major challenges in attracting customers and building brands. Indeed, small hotels, although lack resources, have many advantages in terms of building a personal relationship with customers because of their size, the way they are managed and the opportunity to more easily personalise their interrelationship with the customer. Lack of time, knowledge or resources and uncertainty about commercial confidentiality can all present barriers to the exchange of information among small hotels. The nature of these hotel businesses and their limited investment in management and marketing challenge them to fully exploit the potential of many successful strategies used by larger hotel chains specifically with managing resources, developing marketing and branding strategies and applying new technologies. These strategies can potentially offer the small independent hotel operator a lifeline for business survival, providing an avenue for small independent hotels to compete against larger chains. This is particularly the case of the Egyptian hotel sector that is facing market challenges on all fronts due to political instability and slow economy. In Egypt, independent hotels have limited resources and capabilities due to capital constraints and therefore are unable to withstand commercial pressure exerted by large hotel chains that use finance as a tool to shrink the industry and capture bigger market shares. However, there are a number of ways in which small independent hotels in Egypt can overcome the branding issue and work to enhance penetration into the marketplace. One avenue for small hotels, that is proposed by this research, is to become part of a marketing strategic alliance with an established brand image. As a counter measure, independent hotels have incorporated strategic alliances from both marketing and resource perspectives. The evolution of strategic alliances has been seen as a key success factor as the hospitality industry would not have been able to venture as far as they have without the formation of strategic alliances with tactical business partners. The hotel industry has thrived for centuries and over the course of history it has played a fundamental role towards human progress in social and economic paradigms. The effectiveness of these alliances however, has not been gauged by and examined by specific research and therefore remains in 'grey areas'.

This paper aims to study the motives of independent hoteliers to join a marketing strategic alliance. It explores how the collaborative marketing of independent hotels, through joining a marketing strategic alliance, can improve their service levels as well as how the expansion and diversification of resource usage allows them to enhance the business units in their value chains and gain competitive advantage. Moreover, the study investigates the relationship between a set of important dimensions of a successful marketing strategic alliance for independent hotel.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Marketing Strategic Alliance Definition

Strategic alliance has gained the attention of many researchers during the last few decades. Porter (1990) defines strategic alliances as long term organizational agreements beyond market activities with no merging intentions. These forms of alliances include joint ventures, licences, and long-term supply agreements. Dussauge & Garrette (1995) agrees with the same definition and relates the strategic alliance to independent firms with a determined project through which partners exchange knowledge and share resources to enhance their competences. Douma (1997) confirms that firms representing an alliance must remain independent aimed at avoiding uncertainties and achieving specific organizational strategic objectives by executing common activities of the two companies. Other authors used the term inter-organizational relationship to describe a relationship between partners with common orientation (Faulkner, 1995; Phan, 2000). A common definition is also provided in the work of Crotts et al. (2000), they view alliances as a critical strategic skill of two firms with synergistic strategic value.

“Strategic alliances, relationships, strategic partnerships, and joint ventures all describe the coming together of two firms into a deliberate association that has some synergistic strategic value.” (Crotts et al., 2000:2).

In simple words, a strategic alliance is referred to as partnership that provides firms an opportunity to join forces for mutually beneficial partnership and sustained competitive advantage (Wei, 2007). However, since there is a plethora of definitions, this paper adopts Hsu and Tang (2015:153) definition of marketing strategic alliance:

“Two or more than two companies develop long-term relationships in order to capture potential synergies for integrating the marketing resources and capabilities of each partner, including access to retail systems, marketing knowledge, professional skills, and marketing activities, and for sharing risks, benefits, and trust in order to develop competitive advantages in marketing strategy and create a potential market for gaining the greatest profit from their relationship.”

This definition applies to the case of independent hotels. According to Dunning (2006), hotel marketing strategic alliances are usually formed between hotels of small and medium size in the form of joint venture, licencing agreements, voluntarily hotel operators and other forms of equity and non-equity partnership.

2.2. Strategic Alliances and Independent Hotels

Strategic alliances are broadly used by independent organizations to acquire competitive advantages, sustain higher return on equity and enhance their productive capacities (Morrison, 1994; Tremblay, 1998; Webster, 1999; Weber & Chathoth, 2008; Zamir et al., 2014). Successful alliances are formed with precise objectives that lead towards increasing the economic benefits of allying parties (Vikas & Lather, 2010; Zamir et al., 2014; Niesten & Jolink, 2015). Many authors strongly agree that alliances can be considered as growth vectors that provide avenues to mitigate

risk and advocate cost sharing (Conti & Micera, 2005; Weber & Chathoth, 2008; Sambasivan et al., 2013; Zamir et al., 2014). Therefore, motives behind formation of strategic alliances specifically address environmental uncertainty to a large extent (Ernst & Young, 2014) encouraging independent businesses to re-establish themselves in competitive domains especially when markets are mature (Mowla, 2012).

In such competitive domain setting, the role of alliances can be seen from the perspective of strategy formulation, allowing firms to keep up with the pace of new developments (Kotabe & Scott 1995; Harbison & Pekar, 1997; Ghasham et al., 2016) with the objective of creating value for the firm (Ghasham et al., 2016). The scarcity of resources, along with the need to build strengths to sustain value has driven independent firms to use alliances as a key strategy to gain a competitive advantage. Notably, alliance networks with competitors, suppliers and customers, and firms in other industries have been used as key strategies for value creation (Lewis, 1990; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Ghasham et al., 2016).

The hospitality industry has made extensive use of this strategic option, and managers need to employ it even more in the future as an effective strategy to sustain the value addition in growing and mature markets (Lee-Ross & Lashley, 2010). Strategic alliances need to be established in a manner that would gain advantages of scale therefore reduce cost, lead generation venues to increase guest stay, diversify the hotel business via the introduction of new product and services and the development of collective markets (Bugnar et al., 2009; Liana et al., 2009).

Differentiation has become a major factor in the hotel industry as hotels look towards 'branding' as an avenue to grow their businesses, reduce uncertainties, enter new markets and increase their profit margins (Jiang et al., 2002; Forsgren & Franchetti, 2004). Marketing initiatives based on communication, consistency, and core values coupled with differentiation have attributed to the rise and growth of the independent lodging sector which have generated interest from various areas in the industry (Morrison, 1994). Taylor (2002) confirms that resources and capabilities of small independent hotels are amplified enormously through strategic alliance motives that utilize core resources and capabilities which are intricate, difficult to replicate and essentially offers the hotel operators distinct ownership and control. For example, independent hotels embracing the boutique concept have become popular due to saturation in chain hotel concepts and changes in consumer expectations. The incorporation of strategic alliance formation into their business framework has also offered these independent hotels competitive advantage against bigger rivals (Özarslan, 2014; Ozarslan & Chuang, 2014). Conti & Micera (2005) confirm that if strategic resources are transferable and shareable, independent hotels could gain exponential competitive advantage that could change the current hospitality industry structure as a result of strength of these marketing alliances. The evolution of strategic alliances has ventured independent hotels an opportunity to achieve their organizational objectives better through collaboration than through competition (Crotts et al., 2000).

Although creating strategic alliances has evolved significantly over the last few decades, there are still some constraints to their formation. Nasser (2011) argues that the cohesion of different firms can be volatile if the objectives and criteria of independent hotels seeking alliances are not synergized. This synergy mismatch pertaining to cost, value, productivity, information and resources. Studies of Douma (1997) and Nasser (2011) indicate that despite the gap in the years between their research pertaining to strategic alliances, the fundamental issues have remained as a

concern and alliance motives are not invincible and are as vulnerable to failures as they are to success. A considerable large number of strategic alliances fall short of expectations and are repeatedly revamped until they are either successful or disbanded. Reasons for failures are often attributed to the lack of transparency, inflexibility or financial damage to one or both parties of the alliance (Turk & Ybarra, 2011; Nasser, 2011).

Another disadvantage within the strategic alliance framework arises from the agreements between operators that involve the business units in their respective value chains. These agreements require vertical and horizontal integration that are balanced and provide win-win agreements. Conflict and limited understanding of ownership control and management may cause the alliance to eventually fall into disarray and fail (Steinhilber, 2008; Liana et al., 2009; Nasser, 2011). In most case scenarios, these disadvantages often lead to independent hotels being merged or acquired by larger independent hotel (Vögel & da Cunha, 2010).

2.3 Strategic Alliances Success Factors

Many authors (Volery, 1995; Crofts et al., 2000; Sivadas & Dwyer, 2000; Whipple & Frankel, 2000; Biggs, 2006; Hsu & Tang, 2010; Vikas & Lather, 2010; Vihenda, 2015) have identified the key factors for the formation of strategic alliances successfully. Although previous studies on strategic alliances success factors vary in specific details, they come to an agreement on common factors that contribute to the success of the strategic alliances. An imperial study by Volery (1995) grouped success factors of alliance formation into three dimensions as firm commitment, harmony between partners and feeling of security by both parties of an alliance. Factors relating to these dimensions contribute to the success or failure of a strategic marketing alliance.

Crofts et al. (2000) view the development and management of strategic alliance a critical strategic tool for hospitality and tourism and set forward a number of factors including performance capabilities, goal compatibility, trust, strategic advantage, amount of adaptations/non-retrievable investments, communication, cooperation and social bonding. The fact is that "*these variables must be successfully communicated or evoked in order to attract and retain the interest of a prospective partner in a joint alliance.*" (Crofts et al., 2000:6). Sivadas & Dwyer (2000) develop a list of alliance success factors including eight variables: trust, communication and coordination, governance and administrative mechanisms, partner type, dependence, type of innovation, institutional support, and complementarity of partner competencies. Their study concluded that No alliance can succeed unless the partners can coordinate their activities competently and communicate effectively.

Biggs (2006) identifies an extensive list of factors on which a model for critical success factors to achieve a successful alliance partnership is developed. The model included clear and common vision, shared objectives, mutual needs, appropriate scope, shared control, among other variables. These factors when evident in the formation of a strategic alliance do generate cohesiveness and mutual coordination that leads to achieving the common goal of the alliance (Vihenda, 2015). Vikas & Lather (2010) propose a model (The Strategic Alliance Business Model) of strategic considerations for the formation of strategic alliances giving examples from the Indian travel and hospitality industry. The purpose of the model is to highlight the critical factors that allow travel

businesses to form strategic alliances and gain competitive advantage. In their significant factors, they included: the core capabilities of the partner, leadership in the organizations, capital investment, legal procedures.

Having reviewed relevant studies and based on the discussion above, this study adopts Hsu and Tang's seven fundamental dimensions as critical attributes for the formation of marketing strategic alliances for independent hotels. These factors are:

Commitment

Commitment is a crucial dimension of marketing strategic alliance. Strategic alliances include mutual commitment which is not found in market dealings and transactions. Resource commitments should be made between strategic partners in order to achieve benefits from over market transactions for their alliances.

Trust

Trust is the heart of strategic alliances since it can diminish market challenges and reduce the risk of opportunism. Firms which trust their partners will be highly devoted to their relationships, which will result in positive outcomes for the organization.

Complimentary resources

Alliance partners permit resources and assign people, to build the work process and also to advance it by mutually including people, time and money to guarantee the success for the alliance. Whereas, the traditional methods of doing business, is done just by observing money, people and time as resources to protect themselves and reduce risks.

Market knowledge

Strategic alliance is established in order to gain new skills and strengthen the market knowledge. Achieving market knowledge is an essential dimension in developing alliances. In an alliance, partners learn from one another's knowledge, technology, proficiencies and technical standards.

Similarity of resources

Another key dimension of marketing strategic alliance is the similarity of resources i.e. same resources are being used for the final products by the partners. It will reduce their production cost, time etc. This will improve the returns and benefits therefore will increase the firm's efficiency.

Soundness of financials

If the partners are financially secure, then there is no doubt that the marketing strategic alliance is guaranteed. This is essential because through soundness of financials, there will be strong macroeconomic performance and there will be efficient and effective monetary policy at the national stage.

Intangible assets

In today's competitive global market, intangible assets are the captivating center phase in marketing strategic alliances. Intangible assets include unique processes of business, brands, copyrights etc.

and are used by companies in order to establish a central market position, market growth and build their brands

All these dimensions are interlinked with each other. Firms, when they trust one another, they become more committed to the alliance. This trust and commitment, that is seen as an evident of positive attitude towards the formation of the alliance, would motivate partners of the alliance to cooperate, share knowledge and exchange resources and assets, therefore guaranteeing the success of the alliance for the benefit of all parties. Based on this, the study hypotheses can be formulated in the following statements.

H1: Hoteliers have positive attitudes towards using marketing strategic alliances.

H2: Hotelier's knowledge about their own marketing strategic alliances is sufficient.

H3: The success of strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to a set of dimensions.

H3.a. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to commitment.

H3.b. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to trust.

H3.c. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to complimentary resources.

H3.d. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to market knowledge.

H3.e. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to similarity of resources.

H3.f. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to soundness of financials.

H3.g. The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to intangible assets.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design and methodology for data collection using survey questionnaire and a series of semi-structured interviews, conducted with independent hotel managers and owners to gather empirical evidence of the motives that are behind the formation of strategic alliances and the way they affect the independent hotel industry.

A sequential mixed-methods strategy involved collecting data using qualitative and quantitative research techniques within two phases whereby the data collected in phase one contribute to the development of research hypotheses and the selection of prospective participants who can best provide data in phase two (Driscoll et al., 2007)

Phase one included a series of interviews with a selected purposive sample of small independent hotel executives. Initially a sample of 48 managers, owners and executives who were directly involved in decision making processes in 2,3 and 4 star hotels in Egypt from which only 37

responded. From the 37 only 35 were applicable for the purposes of this research as the remainder was voided by the researcher for a variety of reasons including respondents with no experience with the phenomenon under study or respondents were unable to “bracket” their knowledge, beliefs, and common understandings about the phenomenon. The method of data collection is in-depth (semi-structured) face to face interviewing. The general purpose of using interviewing is “*to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. ... [Researchers] interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe*” (Patton, 1990; 278). The aim of in-depth interviewing is to develop an understanding of the respondent’s world and their constructs, and is suitable where the step-by-step logic of a situation is unclear (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2012).

Interview format was semi-structured using a variety of open-ended questions with the purpose to explore the hoteliers’ experience in as much depth as possible. The rationale behind this was to collect detailed information surrounding the hoteliers' personal perspectives, experiences, and relationships to hotel strategic alliance experience. The interviews conducted lasted between one and two hours, and were designed to encourage interviewees to describe their understandings of hotel strategic alliance and to articulate their beliefs about the impacts, in particular, on their business activities and practices in the future. The interest of the researcher was to arrive at an understanding of the implications of hotel strategic alliance from the hoteliers’ perspectives and to reveal their feelings and beliefs about joining these in future. Each of the thirty-five interviews was transcribed and subject to qualitative analysis. To translate the results from these interviews, a specific approach that involved categorization of responses into certain themes that were inherent in the interview questions was used.

In phase two quantitative data was collected from 127 independent hoteliers using a structured questionnaire in four major tourist destinations in Egypt (Alexandria, Cairo, Sharm El Sheikh and Luxor). The questionnaire collected data related to hotelier's knowledge about their own marketing strategic alliance, their attitudes towards using marketing strategic alliances. They were asked to rate the success of a strategic marketing alliance that was significantly related to a set of dimensions on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. Constructs for the development of the questionnaire were adopted from Hsu & Tang (2015). In their study, Hsu and Tang (2015) developed a macro model through which, hotels can establish long term relationships in forms of strategic alliances. They based their model on the theory of power and views related to knowledge base collected from retailers. The model assists retailers to select the correct marketing strategic alliance partners and identifies seven dimensions for the development of a strategic alliance including: commitment, trust, complimentary resources, market knowledge, similarity of recourses, soundness of financials and intangible assets.

4. RESULTS

Phase 1 Interview analysis

Thirty-five qualitative interviews took place in December 2016, the results of which were coded. The analysis of this generated interesting insight into the motivations and barriers of joining a hotel strategic alliance. There were a number of motivating factors to joining a hotel marketing strategic alliance; including, being part of a collective consensus, marketing and business opportunities along with its cost effectiveness. A number of considerations when looking to join a hotel marketing

strategic alliance also came to light. Each of the motivations and barriers will be discussed in turn below.

The importance of being associated with a good business brand was highlighted by one fifth of those interviewed; namely for the return on investment potential. Unlike a single entity, a marketing strategic alliance commands great presence and a large stake in the market. This is of particular benefit to small member hotels who become more established by the association of a bigger brand. There is also the benefit that competitors can be part of the same brand, carrying the 'flag', thus promoting your business for you.

"It's not for prestige that I would join a marketing strategic alliance. My prerogative would be motivated by the positives that come with associating myself with a good business brand, such as a good return on investment".

Half of the interviewees stressed the well- established sales and marketing platforms that marketing strategic alliances command. Hotels in marketing strategic alliance will have one robust marketing and advertising strategy that benefits all hotels within the group. One interviewee praised the vast marketing network that he has been able to benefit from. This established global network that has been built up over time; a feat difficult for a single entity to accomplish alone. Thus, hotels with the marketing strategic alliance have an edge over those that are not part of the group, whilst being able to remain the unit hotel business that they are. This marketing network also adds a sense of sustainability to the businesses of those in the marketing strategic alliance, which allows them to focus their time and efforts on different matters which require their attention.

Analysis showed that belonging to a marketing strategic alliance increases the reservation and booking opportunities. Attracting business as one unit successfully benefits all members says one hotelier, who describes reservations as trickling down 'quite evenly' to all the member businesses. Additionally, being part of a marketing strategic alliance can protect businesses as marketing strategic alliance travel agencies treat all hotels as equals, and thereby channel business fairly to all members. As explained by one hotelier:

"This preferential treatment for members is very healthy for any emerging business that belongs to marketing strategic alliance; growth is amazingly fast and steady".

One interviewee discussed the potential of belonging to a marketing strategic alliance for marketing and advertising purposes only, however believed that this came at a cost by having to paying a percentage of revenue to the marketing strategic alliance. Whereas, he argued that being a full-time member or partner seems more beneficial; they do not have to pay percentages of revenue, and are able to gain from the all additional benefits of a marketing strategic alliance.

The opportunities available to those in a marketing strategic alliance were highlighted by eighty per cent of the interviewees. There was a definite sense of "camaraderie" between member hotels. Members are not only able to share a marketing network, but also share knowledge, such as purchasing and supply, financial administration and quality assurance. Being part of a larger group makes it easier for small businesses to respond to certain business trends, including both business opportunities and also threats to business. Through the larger team, hoteliers are able to see important factors that may directly or indirectly affect their business. As outlined by one hotelier: "It makes it easier to tackle competitors as one bloc than if I were trading on my own".

A running theme through the interviews was the belief that hoteliers could not achieve what the marketing strategic alliance has achieved for them if they were on their own. Riding on the waves of the impact of a big business allows the smaller business *“to achieve great goals as a result of collective successes”* describes one hotelier. Moving together as a unit, led by collective strategic decisions was highlighted as a benefit of marketing strategic alliances by six of the hoteliers. Decisions made by the central management team mean that the group all move at the same pace, guaranteeing good and smooth functionality of the business as well as its steady and positive growth.

Hotels in a marketing strategic alliance tend to pay fees commensurate to the size of their hotel. One hotelier believed that this is fair, by knowing that there are “proportional benefits as per input”. Nevertheless, this is still an investment that hoteliers need to justify making:

“As much as I have joined a marketing strategic alliance, I know it is just an investment that I am making. Therefore, I do understand that I need to work to recoup my resources invested in the venture. So, the subscriptions and other fees required of by the marketing strategic alliance are in themselves an investment”.

Interviewees highlighted a number of points to be considered by hoteliers when joining marketing strategic alliance; some of which had discouraged hoteliers becoming a stakeholder. Potential return on investment, and the reputations of other member hotels need to be understood.

Five hoteliers discussed the negative implications that other member's activity could have on the marketing strategic alliance as a brand. Two hoteliers who described themselves as having well-established business positions, were worried about joining a marketing strategic alliance which could be associated with weak enterprises or individuals. One of these individuals thought it may be difficult for clients to identify with a hotel's individual brand, due to the different standards of members within marketing strategic alliance. Thus, well established brands could suffer if operating through a marketing strategic alliance. The other's concern was that weaker business' activity could have a lasting damaging effect on his business and reputation. However, this can be prevented by uniformity in the way components of the marketing strategic alliance do business, explains two of the hoteliers. As one outlined:

“It's a good idea that hotel marketing strategic alliance normally streamline or structure rates in such a manner that they are comparatively uniform. That way I know my business is not disadvantaged by any 'malpractices' from any member of the marketing strategic alliance”.

Another hotelier discussed the effect of smaller businesses not being able to *“live up to”* to established product brand of the marketing strategic alliance. To deal with this challenge, he suggests that *“modalities have to be initiated or implemented where the marketing strategic alliance ensures that the smaller or weaker members do not jeopardise the reputation ... by adhering to standards”.*

However, one hotelier of a smaller business claims that these standards are in place, and that smaller businesses work hard to achieve them:

“I still have lots of work to do. I have to bring my business up to standards that are defined by the marketing strategic alliance brand. Because of 'my surroundings' I

will muster the confidence to grow my business to the levels set by the 'big boys' of the group or beyond".

Phase 2 Questionnaire analysis

Descriptive statistics were primarily used to describe survey responses and summarize results with respect to hypotheses. Means, medians, standard deviations, and confidence intervals are given where appropriate. Otherwise, simple frequencies were tabulated and summarized for other measures. Spearman's rank correlations were used to assess interrelationships between ratings of importance between dimensions of commitment, trust, complimentary resources, market knowledge, similarity of resources, soundness of financials, and intangible assets.

Demographics

Table 1 displays demographic information for the hoteliers surveyed. Most of them (64.6%) were male working at 3-star hotels (70.1%). The average age of the respondents was 33.9 years, and the average time employed was 5.23 years.

Table 2 Demographics

	Mean	Median	SD	95% CI	Skewness
Age	33.94	33	5.7	[32.93, 34.96]	0.501
Years Employed	5.23	4	3.591	[4.60, 5.86]	1.81
	Frequency	%			
Gender					
Male	82	64.60%			
Female	45	35.40%			
Rank					
2 Stars	15	11.80%			
3 Stars	89	70.10%			
4 Stars	23	18.10%			

H1: Hoteliers have positive attitudes towards using marketing strategic alliances.

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics for items in the motives, criteria, and benefits sections of the survey. Respondents showed a very high rate of agreement with the statement that joining a marketing alliance was vital to their organization. On a scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, the mean response was 4.37 ($SD = .824$; 95% CI [4.23, 4.51]) and the median was 5. Cost was the highest rated motivation on average for joining an alliance ($M = 3.61$), while knowledge (diversification and development) was rated the lowest on average ($M = 2.35$). When asked indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with the given criteria that the strategic alliances are based upon, all items received very high ratings (all means ≥ 4.15). Respondents chose the amount of adaptations/non-retrievable investments as the highest rated item on average ($M = 4.48$) while social bonding was rated the lowest ($M = 4.15$). The potential benefits of marketing alliances were also rated highly by the hoteliers; providing effective training and competitiveness were rated highest (both means = 4.41) while information systems was rated the lowest ($M = 4.13$). Overall, these results support hypothesis 1: hotelier's had generally positive motivations and aspirations for joining a strategic marketing alliance.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the ratings of motives, criteria, and benefits in joining a strategic alliance

	N	Mean	95% CI	Median	SD	Skewness
I agree that joining a hotel strategic alliance is a vital decision for my hotel. (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)	127	4.37	[4.23, 4.51]	5	0.824	-1.303
Motives						
Cost (Finance)	122	3.61	[3.37, 3.86]	4	1.351	-0.473
Lead Generation (Marketing)	120	2.96	[2.70, 3.21]	3	1.417	-0.052
Market Growth (Marketing)	118	2.64	[2.37, 2.92]	2.5	1.522	0.313
Knowledge (Diversification and Development)	118	2.35	[2.09, 2.61]	2	1.423	0.541
Criteria						
Reputation	127	4.29	[4.13, 4.45]	5	0.927	-0.98
Performance Capabilities	127	4.28	[4.12, 4.44]	5	0.916	-0.91
Goal Compatibility	127	4.17	[4.01, 4.34]	5	0.952	-0.692
Trust	127	4.39	[4.26, 4.53]	5	0.788	-1.123
Strategic Advantage	126	4.4	[4.26, 4.54]	5	0.801	-1.129

Amount of Adaptations/Non-Retrieveable Investments	127	4.48	[4.37, 4.59]	5	0.615	-0.963
Communication	127	4.31	[4.17, 4.46]	5	0.842	-0.977
Cooperation	127	4.22	[4.06, 4.38]	4	0.899	-0.785
Social Bonding	127	4.15	[3.98, 4.32]	4	0.943	-0.708
Benefits						
Management	127	4.14	[3.97, 4.31]	4	0.957	-0.675
Effective Training	127	4.41	[4.29, 4.53]	5	0.671	-0.704
Information System	127	4.13	[3.96, 4.30]	4	0.968	-0.63
Competitiveness	127	4.41	[4.29, 4.53]	5	0.671	-0.704
Infrastructure	127	4.35	[4.23, 4.47]	4	0.685	-0.589
Marketing, branding, sales	127	4.23	[4.09, 4.37]	4	0.779	-0.424

H2: Hotelier's knowledge about their own marketing strategic alliances is sufficient.

Table 3 displays descriptive statistics and frequencies of the two items that measured awareness of marketing strategic alliances. The majority (56.7%) of hoteliers were not aware of the alliance their own hotels had with other independent hotels, and a non-trivial proportion were unsure (12.6%). A large majority (80.3%) reported that they were aware of zero strategic alliances with other hotels. These results suggest that hoteliers are at best moderately aware of the strategic marketing alliance that their own hotels have.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics for items relating to background and knowledge of strategic alliances

	Response	N	%
Are you aware of the strategic alliances that this hotel has with other independent hotels?			
	Yes	39	30.7%
	No	72	56.7%
	Not Sure	16	12.6%
How many strategic alliances are you aware of that this hotel has with other independent hotels?			
	0	102	80.3%
	1	20	15.7%
	2	4	3.1%
	3	1	0.8%

H3: The success of a strategic marketing alliance is significantly related to a set of dimensions.

Table 4 displays descriptive statistics of the dimensions measured for importance in forming strategic alliances. complimentary resources were cited as the most important dimension for forming an alliance with another hotel ($M = 4.28$), while intangible assets were rated the lowest ($M = 4.04$). Again, all dimensions were rated highly.

Table 5 displays Spearman's rank correlations between the dimensions rated for importance. Trust showed a significant negative relationship with complimentary resources (Spearman's $\rho = -.303$, $p < .01$), but a significant positive relationship with market knowledge (Spearman's $\rho = .99$, $p < .01$). complimentary resources also showed a significant negative relationship with market knowledge (Spearman's $\rho = -.288$, $p < .01$), but a positive relationship with intangible assets (Spearman's $\rho = .281$, $p < .01$). Similarity in resources showed a significant positive relationship with soundness of financials (Spearman's $\rho = .243$, $p < .01$) and intangible assets (Spearman's $\rho = .340$, $p < .01$). Finally, Soundness of Financials showed a significant negative relationship with intangible assets (Spearman's $\rho = -.184$, $p < .05$).

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for importance of dimensions for forming strategic alliances

	N	Mean	Median	SD	95% CI	Skewness
Commitment	1127	4.24	4	0.763	[4.11, 4.38]	-0.446
Trust	1127	4.18	5	1.019	[4.00, 4.36]	-0.692
Complimentary resources	1127	4.28	5	0.842	[4.13, 4.42]	-0.723
Market knowledge	1127	4.2	5	0.995	[4.03, 4.38]	-0.669
Similarity of resources	1127	4.32	5	0.796	[4.18, 4.46]	-0.649
Soundness of financials	1127	4.16	4	0.821	[4.01, 4.30]	-0.3
Intangible assets	1127	4.04	4	0.82	[3.90, 4.18]	-0.073

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Analysis of data has shown that there are a number of benefits of being in a marketing strategic alliance which cannot be denied; brand identity, marketing opportunities, the potential for knowledge sharing, and cost effectiveness. These motivations were stressed considerably throughout the interviews. However, the analysis also highlighted a number of considerations and implications for hoteliers wishing to join, or are currently part of a marketing strategic alliance.

Well established enterprises must ensure that any marketing strategic alliance they may join has structured standards, which all members adhere to. The effect of weaker members of the marketing strategic alliance, and any negative activity which they may be party to, can be damaging to a well-established business member. Whilst potential return on investment must also be considered, those within a marketing strategic alliance all felt that marketing strategic alliance was a cost effect enterprise. The marketing and advertising network that they are part of and the guarantee of

reservations specifically in the peak season were worth the fees and subscriptions associated with marketing strategic alliance. Additionally, all members are essentially part of the same group as their competition, meaning that their brand is carried and promoted by the competition.

Table 5. Spearman's rho correlations between dimensions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Commitment	1						
2. Trust	-0.148	1					
3. Complimentary resources	0.007	-	1				
4. Market knowledge	-0.164	.990**	.288**	1			
5. Similarity of resources	0.156	-0.054	0.127	-0.035	1		
6. Soundness of financials	0.103	-0.009	-0.063	0.013	.243*	1	
7. Intangible assets	0.047	-0.139	.281**	-0.129	.340*	.184*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

There were also considerations for smaller businesses wishing to join, or currently a member of a marketing strategic alliance. Smaller hotels have to work hard to maintain the standards required of them, to avoid risking the reputation of the marketing strategic alliance. However, there are many motivations for small businesses to become a member of a marketing strategic alliance. Less time and effort spent on marketing their business, due to the marketing and sales platforms and capabilities associated with the marketing strategic alliance, allows hoteliers to spend more time and effort on perfecting other areas of the business. It is also deemed as cost effective. Hoteliers commented on the fair way that all members of the marketing strategic alliance, regardless of size, have increase clientele from the marketing strategic alliance. Other benefits for smaller businesses include a safer business, with a quick and steady growth.

Taken together, results from the current study suggest that hoteliers are highly motivated to join marketing strategic alliances and that they have positive attitudes towards them. However, data also reveal that hoteliers in this sample lack some knowledge about their own strategic alliances. Respondents rated all of the dimensions measured on the survey very highly. Complimentary Resources was rated as the most important dimension on average, indicating that hoteliers are motivated to seek cooperative partnerships through strategic alliances.

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Tipping Motives in Egyptian Restaurants: Customers' View

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ABSTRACT

Tipping is an important and prominent phenomenon in the Egyptian society especially in restaurants. Despite its importance, the phenomenon of tipping did not receive sufficient attention from researchers in the field of hospitality in Egypt. Therefore, the main objectives of this study were; (1) to determine the different tipping motivators/dimensions for tipping reported in previous researches in the context of the hospitality industry worldwide, (2) to indicate the importance of these motivators/dimensions in the Egyptian hospitality context through a field study conducted on Egyptian restaurants' customers, (3) to understand the relationship among the different motivators/dimensions of tipping, and (4) to investigate the difference in perceiving the importance of these motivators/dimensions among different demographic groups of customers.

To achieve the objectives, this study used a quantitative and qualitative data collection approach through reviewing the literature and distributing online questionnaires that were developed based on reliable and validated scales developed by previous researchers. The population of the study included restaurant customers in Egypt. Due to the large population size, it was difficult to use random sampling techniques. Therefore, convenience sample was used and accordingly 663 questionnaires were collected from which 651 were valid for data analysis.

Results of the study indicated that rewarding service quality recorded the highest importance among other motivators/dimensions when it comes to explain Egyptian customers' tipping motivations followed by the quality of food and beverages, seeking better service in future visits, assisting service employees, gaining social approval, following social norms and the desire to impress others. Additionally, results indicated that rewarding service quality, gaining social approval, and the desire

to impress others are more important tipping motivators/dimensions for male rather than for female customers. On the other hand, helping service employees, seeking better future service, following social norms and quality of food and beverages are more important tipping motivators/dimensions for female rather than for male customers. Finally, results supported the existence of a significant and positive relationship between all the tipping motivators/dimensions. In addition, limitations, future research directions and implications for restaurants' managers were presented in this study.

Key Words: Tipping, Tipping motives, Tipping dimensions, Restaurants, Egypt

1 INTRODUCTION

It has turned out to be ordinary practices that clients especially in service industry regularly give an amount of money beyond the contracted prices of those services known as tipping for appreciation to the workers who have served them (Zahari, Rashdi, Radzi and Othman, 2011; Casey, 2001; Lynn, 2000; Lynn and McCall, 2000; Ineson and Martin, 1999). Star (1988) states "...among service workers commonly receiving tips are barbers, bartenders, cab drivers, casino croupiers, concierges, deliverymen, doormen, exotic dancers, golf caddies, hotel maids, masseuses, parking valets, pool attendants, porters, restaurant musicians, washroom attendants, waiters, shoe-shiners, and tour guides". For many of these service workers, tips represent the majority part of their income. Even the amount of tips given to an employee is small it cannot be considered unimportant (Lynn, Jabbour, and Kim, 2012). Various opinions exist concerning the emergence of tipping (Azar, 2007). For example Hemenway (1993) stated that tipping goes back to the Roman era and even beyond. Other researchers attributed the origins of tipping to the era of the feudal lords who used to give money to beggars in order to pass safely (Schein, Jablonski and Wohlfahrt, 1984). For Segrave (1998) tipping may have started in the middle ages as the Master Lords of that era used to give extra money to the butlers in their mansions for a job well done. According to Brenner (2001), tipping originates to the local bars and coffee houses of 16th century in England.

Tipping has not yet gotten consideration among the Egyptian and Arab scholars contrasted with the western scholars. With the improvement of Egyptian tourism, accommodation and restaurant business, empirical studies in the Egyptian context are highly needed. Therefore, this research creates one of the few endeavors that illustrate this important phenomenon among Egyptian and Arab researchers. Accordingly, the purpose of the present research is three-fold. Firstly, it will determine the different motivators/dimensions for tipping reported in previous researches. Then, these motivators/dimensions for tipping will be examined from Egyptian restaurant customers' point of view. Secondly, an investigation of differences in customers' perceptions of the tipping motivators/dimensions among different types of customers will be conducted. Thirdly, the relationship among the different motivators/dimensions of tipping will be tested. Therefore, against this background the overriding research questions for this study is presented as follows:

RQ.1: What are the different dimensions and reasons that motivate customers to tip in Egyptian restaurants?

RQ.2: What is the arrangement of all the reasons and dimensions in descending order according to the degree of their impact on customers' willingness to leave tipping?

RQ.3: Do the dimensions that motivate customers to tip differ significantly according to their demographic and behavioral characteristics (gender, social status, with whom/eat out, preferred restaurant type)?

RQ.4: Is there a correlation between the different dimensions that motivate the tipping behavior of Egyptian restaurant customers?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

a. THEORIZED MOTIVES/DIMENSIONS FOR TIPPING

Tips have become a prominent element particularly in the food services industry (Brewster, 2013). It is an economic phenomenon consisting of a voluntary payment by customers for services received (Artuğer and Çetinsöz, 2013). Different dimensions that represent the motivators of customers to engage in the tipping behavior were discussed in the literature (Lynn, 2009). These dimensions are discussed in the following sections.

Rewarding Good Service Quality: Many positive service employees' behaviors, which are considered of the main components of service quality, were correlated with customers' desirability to leave tips. For example, when quality of service was analyzed, customers believed that friendliness and speed were the most important factors that motivated them to tip (Jewell, 2008). Likewise, different studies proved that server attractiveness was found to be a significant motivational factor for customers' to leave tips (Jacob and Guéguen, 2012; Jacob, Guéguen, Boulbry, and Ardiccioni, 2010; Lynn, 2009; Koku, 2005; Lynn and Simons, 2000; Hornik, 1992; May, 1980; Stillman and Hensley, 1980). Similarly, server attentiveness to customers' was positively associated with their intention to leave a tip, especially in countries where customers value behaviors that constitutes status display (Star, 1988; Lynn, 1994, 1997, 2000; Lynn, Zinkhan, Harris, 1993). Finally, server knowledge of menu items as well as their ability to express good suggestions to customers was found to be an important incentive for leaving tips (Whaley, 2011; Lynn and Graves, 1996).

Helping Service Employees: The desire to help service workers was one of the most common motives for tipping reported by customers (Lynn, 2009). Speer (1997) conducted a nationwide telephone survey on tipping behavior in America and used the results to summarize the views of average Americans. Average Americans indicated that helping those in the service industry to make a living is the second biggest reason for why they leave tips. According to Jewell (2008) there were three main reasons given for why individuals tip: service quality, to help others make a living, and the feeling of expectation. Compensating low-income workers was also considered among the important factors that drive customers to leave Tipping (Videbeck, 2004; Holloway, 1985; Snyder, 1976).

Moreover, clients jump at the chance to tip since it permits them to demonstrate their appreciation for the service they got or their sympathy for the low-paid employees (Azar, 2004). As well, according to the Hotel and Catering Industry Economic Development Committee (1970), people tip for the following reasons; “It is a good way of showing gratitude for good service or cooking (53%), it is the accepted practice (50%), it can be embarrassing not to (30%), and Staff need the extra income from tips (19%)”. Lynn and Graves (1996) hypothesized that a desire for equitable relationships influenced the level of tipping.

Seeking Better Service in the Future: Azar (2004) indicated that gaining good service in the future is among the factors that motivate customers to tip. He interpreted this relationship by stating that “when customers tip well for good service, the tipper encourages the service provider to provide good service in their next encounter”. In the same vein, Ben-Zion and Karni (1977) developed a theoretical model that suggested that tipping behavior can be explained by loyal guests returning back to the restaurant. Additionally, Lynn and Grassman (1990) found a positive correlation between future service concerns for repeated customers and tip size. They indicated that regular guests will tip consistently or more generously, because their tipping practice may become a topic of discussion among other staff members.

Gaining Social Approval: The wish to gain social acceptance and avoid perception of being guilt is among the important motives for tipping reported by customers (Becker, Bradley, and Zantow, 2012; Lynn; 2009; Azar, 2004; Bodvarsson and Gibson, 1997). Lynn and Grassman (1990) found that gaining social approval from either service employees or companions was the most important factor that affect customers’ desire to leave tipping. Although those results confirmed the importance of tipping as a way to demonstrate good social appearance, but it conflicted with previous studies that confirmed that the main catalyst to leave tipping is getting outstanding service in the future. Likewise, Azar (2007) argued that individuals leave tip as a way to show appreciation for outstanding service employees and on the other hand stay away from negative sentiments employees. Similarly, Videbeck (2004) stated that numerous clients tip keeping in mind the end goal to support self-regard and keep the disgraceful sentiments from not tipping.

Following Social Norms: Coping with social norms was among the important studied factors that motivate customers to tip (Azar, 2004; Lynn and McCall, 2000; Bodvarsson and Gibson, 1997). Lynn (2001) further posited that customers leave a tip in order to cope with social norms and as a way to avoid possible social pressures. According to Saunders and Lynn (2010), customers gain a feeling of pride when adjusting to the social standards of tipping and a sense of blame from neglecting to fit in with these standards. Azar (2010) conducted a study on what motivated American restaurant customers to tip and indicated that American customers were motivated to tip mainly by social norms followed by the desire to show appreciation and ensure additional income to the waiters. Finally, Lynn (2008) found that there is a significant and positive relationship between customers’ support for the tipping custom and the percentage of the bill that they leave for service workers.

Desire to Impress Others: Among the other factors that were theorized as an important reason for leaving tips is customers’ desire to impress others. According to Lynn (1997) tipping is positively

related to customers desire to express a status display and its goal is to impress other people. In this regard, Parrett (2006) state “customers may tip a higher amount in the presence of others at the table in order to assert social status. Status considerations play a nontrivial role in real-world interactions and thus might induce customers to tip more as a form of status acquisition or display”. Additionally, Azar (2004) indicated that the desire to make a power display can be listed among some other motivations that affect tipping. For those customers who have this desire, tipping become an important tool to promote this sense through the feeling of power that it gives to customers over service employees (Lynn et al., 1993).

Quality of Food and Beverages: Food quality as a motivator for tipping received little attention from academic scholars when compared to service quality. Medler-Liraz (2012) found that food quality moderates the positive relationship between service quality and tip size. In concrete, when the quality of food and beverages was rated as superb, no significant differences in tip size were found between satisfied and unsatisfied customers with service quality. On the other hand, significant differences were found in tip size between satisfied and unsatisfied customers when the quality of food and beverage was rated as reasonable. Moreover, Lynn and Latané (1984) stated that “Past research has also concluded that in a restaurant setting, the tipping behavior of customers is affected by various factors that are unrelated to the quality of service such as; the waitperson’s efforts, the waitperson’s gender, the restaurant’s atmosphere, and the restaurant’s food”.

b. TIPPING IN EGYPT

The Egyptian term for “*Tip*” is “Baqsheesh”. Tipping in Egypt takes more than one form. Firstly, like most countries the custom of leaving tips in Egypt is prevalent and expected by employees in many places where a service is rendered (e.g. Restaurants, hotels, beaches, cafeterias, hospitals, airports, at the door of a restaurant bathroom, tour guides, casinos, clothing stores, cruise ships, train employees, and bus and taxis drivers). Secondly, according to Carta (2013), another type of tipping in Egypt is given to employees in order to guarantee additional privileges (e.g. a customer who want to see an excellent photo location, a customer who want to see a forbidden mummy, having a light in a museum display case, increasing food and beverage portion sizes, and customers requiring special attention from service employees). A third form of tipping is assigning some positions to employees’ who depend solely on tips as their only source for income such as bathroom attendants. Collected tips for those employees form their monthly salary irrespective of their value. Tipping in Egypt is not only in the tourism industry, Egyptians also tip each other. It is very much a way of life and a cultural thing. Most Egyptian employees in the tourist business receive rather low monthly wages, and they are thus depending very much on tips to enhance their income (Tripadvisor.com, 2015). The most common way of distributing tips among employees in Egyptian restaurants is to collect and pool tips and then to distribute the money that are collected at the end of the month among service employees according to an established point system (Zahari, et al., 2011).

c. THE PROPOSED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In conclusion, based on the literature review, several motivators stand out as potentially influencing customer’s motivation to tip. Below is a diagram that represents the proposed theoretical model

(Figure 1). This model proposes that tipping is multi-dimensional and very complex phenomena. It also assumes that tipping is influenced by many motivational factors. Based upon review of the literature, those motivational factors include: Rewarding good service quality, assisting service employees, seeking better service in the future, gaining social approval, following social norms, desire to impress others and quality of food and beverages. Researchers will assess the degree to which each of these factors plays a role in motivating customers to tip.

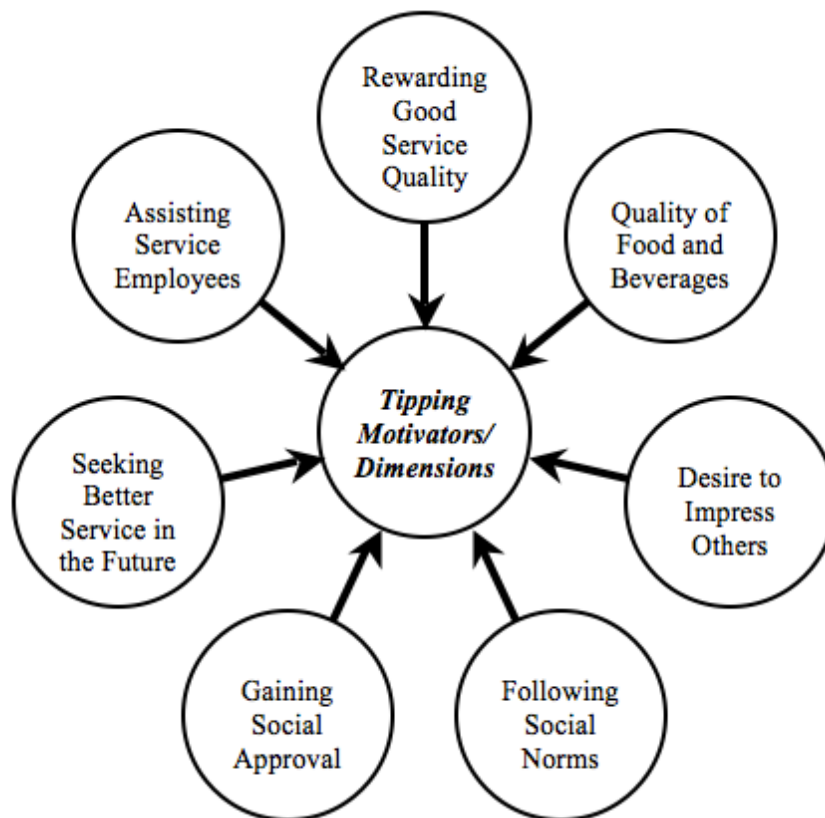


Figure 1: A Proposed Model for Tipping Motivations/Dimensions

3 METHODOLOGY

a. RESEARCH APPROACH, SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

The main objective of this research was to examine the tipping motives/dimensions discussed earlier in the context of restaurant setting in Egypt from customers' point of view. The study used a quantitative and qualitative data collection approach through the distribution of online questionnaires that were designed with the objective of providing concrete answers for the research questions. Quantitative research strategy can be seen as one of the most commonly and popular applied methods within the tourism and hospitality research, since "it involves the collection of customer-based data which, in turn, can be used to statistically analyze and investigate a prior specified relationships among variables of interest to the corresponding study" (Neuman, 2005). The population of this study included restaurant customers in Egypt. Due to the large community

size, it was difficult to use random sampling techniques. Therefore, convenience sampling was the most suitable sampling technique to employ in this research. The final survey was developed based on reliable and validated scales developed by previous scholars as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Scale Development for the Second Questionnaire Section

<i>Theorized Motives/Dimensions for Tipping</i>	<i>Objective of this part</i>	<i>Previous researches used to develop the scale</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>
Rewarding Service Quality	To indicate the extent to which different service quality attributes (speed, attractiveness, knowledge of menu items, friendliness, kind smiling, attentive, and providing good suggestions by about menu items) would motivate customers to leave tips.	Lynn, 2008; Lynn, 2009; and Becker, Bradley, and Zantow, 2012.	5-point scales ranging from 1 =strongly disagree to 5 =strongly agree
Assisting Service Employees	To explore whether assisting employees in the service sector and requiring equitable relationships with them are among the important factors that motivates customers to tip or not.	Snyder, 1976; Lynn 2008; Lynn 2009; and Azar, 2010.	
Seeking Better Service in the Future	To assess whether customers are motivated to tip based on future service considerations or not.	Ben-Zion and Karni, 1977; Lynn, 2008; and Lynn, 2009.	
Gaining Social Approval	To examine if customers' wish to gain social approval is among the important motives for tipping or not.	Lynn and Grassman, 1990; and Becker, Bradley, and Zantow, 2012.	
Following Social Norms	To indicate the extent to which the three influential social connections (employees, family members and friends) could force customers to tip by norm as well as to avoid guilt.	Lynn and Grassman, 1990; Lynn 2008; Lynn 2009; and Becker, Bradley, and Zantow, 2012.	
Impressing Others	To examine whether customers are motivated to tip to display themselves.	Reiss, 2004; Lynn, 2009; and Becker, Bradley, and	

		Zantow, 2012.	
Rewarding Good Quality of F&B	To examine the degree to which the tipping behavior of customers is affected by food and beverages quality.	Lynn and Latané, 1984; and Medler-Liraz, 2012.	

b. QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION

Customers were asked to complete an online survey that addressed the different tipping motivations outlined previously in the literature review and in table 1. In order to guarantee a high response rate, researchers tried to design a short and attractive questionnaire to ensure the credibility of the answers obtained. Accordingly, 663 questionnaires were collected, from which only 651 questionnaires were valid for data analysis.

4 RESULTS

a. BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CUSTOMERS

The behavioral characteristics of customers are represented in Table 2. A high percentage of respondents prefer to go to the restaurant with family members (59.6%), followed by those who prefer to dine out with friends (34.2%) and only 2.5% of respondents prefer to dine out alone. Regarding the last visit for eating out, the largest proportion of respondents indicated that they ate at a restaurant in the last week (46.5%), followed by those who had their last meal at a restaurant two weeks and three weeks ago (18.3%; 13.2%), and the lowest percentage was for those who had their meal out at the same day of questionnaire distribution (1.7%). This result supports the proportionality of the sample with the objectives of the study as 90.3% of respondents had eaten out in a restaurant at least once in the month before the questionnaire distribution. Concerning the preferred restaurant for customers, it has been made available to respondents to choose one or more of the answers available because the customer may prefer to diversify his dining experiences. Regarding the number of times customers have their meals out of home, the highest percentage of respondents regularly eat out twice monthly (22.6%), followed by those who often eat out once monthly (19.8%), then those who often eat out four times monthly (19.7%), and the lowest percentage was for those who eat out less than once monthly (6.1%). Concerning the frequency of leaving tips, a high percentage of respondents stated that they always leave tips after eating in a restaurant (55.8%), followed by those who sometime leave tips (42.4%), while a very limited proportion of them (1.8%) stated that they never leave tips after eating out.

Table 2: Behavioral Characteristics of Respondents

Behavioral Characteristics	F.	%	Behavioral Characteristics	F.	%
With Whom Do You Prefer to Eat-Out			Type of Restaurant Preferred*		
Alone	16	2.5	Quick Service	304	46.7
With Family	388	59.6	Casual Dining	366	56.2
With Friends	223	34.2	Fine Dining	130	20.0
Both Friends & Family	24	3.7	National Dining	401	61.6
When Was Your Last Visit to Eat-Out			How Often Do You Eat-Out/Month		
Today	11	1.7	Less than Once	40	6.1
During Last Week	303	46.5	Once	129	19.8
Two Weeks Ago	119	18.3	Twice	147	22.6
Three Weeks Ago	86	13.2	Three Times	86	13.2
One Month Ago	80	12.3	Four Times	128	19.7
More than one Month Ago	52	8.0	More than 4 Times	121	18.6
Do You Usually Leave Tips			<i>* choosing multiple answers was allowed.</i>		
Always	363	55.8			
Sometimes	276	42.4			
Never	12	1.8			

6. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This section reports the statistical test results of the various study constructs. Means, frequencies, and percentages of each data set are provided to illustrate a general view of the findings. Other tests such as Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r), Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis were employed to answer different research questions.

RQ.1. *What are the different motivators/dimensions that encourage customers to tip in Egyptian restaurants?*

Answering this question aims at evaluating to what extent customers are motivated to leave tips for certain reasons, as well as determining the most and least important reasons from customers' point of view. In order to answer this question, descriptive analysis was performed utilizing means, percent, and frequencies. Presentation of the descriptive analysis is shown in Table 3. Different reasons for tipping were placed under different motivators/dimensions and were arranged in descending order using means of scores. Each motivator/dimension represents one of the theorized motives for tipping in previous research.

The first motivator/dimension discusses the importance of the quality of service as one of the important motives for tipping. The second motivator/dimension illustrates the importance of helping service employees as one of the tipping motives and reported an above average agreement (Overall Mean= 3.59). The most important reason in this regard was "to compensate waiters according to the effort they make" (M= 4.22), followed by "compensating poorly paid service workers" (M= 3.51), and "guaranteeing an equitable relation with employees" (M= 3.05).

The third motivator/dimension demonstrates the significance of future service considerations as one of the motivations to leave tipping and was represented by two reasons (Overall Mean= 3.67). Among the two reasons, "If you are a repeat guest" recorded a higher score (M= 3.85), than the other reason "to get superior service on future visits" (M= 3.49).

Table 3: Customers' View for Tipping Motives/Dimensions in Egyptian Restaurants

Motives/Dimensions Tipping		for	Overall Agreement										Mea n
			Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		
			F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	F.	%	
A. Rewarding Service Quality													3.93
1.	Server friendliness		27	4.1	5	0.8	33	5.1	210	32. 3	376	57. 8	4.38
2.	Server attentiveness		20	3.1	4	0.6	62	9.5	274	42. 1	291	44. 7	4.24
3.	The standing kind smile of service providers		21	3.2	17	2.6	120	18. 4	282	43. 3	211	32. 4	3.99
4.	Speed of service		23	3.5	38	5.8	115	17. 7	237	36. 4	238	36. 6	3.96
5.	Server knowledge of all information related to menu items		45	6.9	46	7.1	115	17. 7	282	43. 3	163	25. 0	3.72
6.	Server attractiveness		49	7.5	35	5.4	166	25. 5	208	32. 0	193	29. 6	3.70
7.	Good suggestions by		38	5.8	90	13.	169	26.	216	33.	138	21.	3.50

waiters about menu items		8	0	2	2							
B. Assisting Service Employees												3.59
1.	Compensating waiters according to the effort they make	8	1.2	22	3.4	80	12.3	248	38.1	293	45.0	4.22
2.	To compensate poorly paid service workers	57	8.8	55	8.4	202	31.0	167	25.7	170	26.1	3.51
3.	To guarantee an equitable relation with employees	121	18.6	63	9.7	229	35.2	138	21.2	100	15.4	3.05
C. Seeking Better Service in the Future												3.67
1.	If you are a repeat guest	36	5.5	27	4.1	115	17.7	291	44.7	182	28.0	3.85
2.	To get superior service on future visits	86	13.2	44	6.8	119	18.3	263	40.4	139	21.4	3.49
D. Gaining Social Approval												2.66
1.	To buy social approval from employees	167	25.7	77	11.8	192	29.5	150	23.0	65	10.0	2.79
2.	To buy social approval from companions	201	30.9	136	20.9	157	24.1	87	13.4	70	10.8	2.52
E. Following Social Norms												2.48
1.	To follow social norms	149	22.9	93	14.3	160	24.6	187	28.7	62	9.5	2.87
2.	To avoid feeling guilty in front of employees	191	29.3	155	23.8	160	24.6	115	17.7	30	4.6	2.44
3.	To avoid feeling guilty in front of friends	226	34.7	132	20.3	184	28.3	84	12.9	25	3.8	2.30
4.	To avoid feeling guilty in front of family	220	33.8	140	21.5	196	30.1	72	11.1	23	3.5	2.29
F. Desire to Impress Others												1.70
1.	Gives a feeling of superiority and power among others	408	62.7	79	12.1	124	19.0	31	4.8	9	1.4	1.70
G. Food and Beverage Quality												3.80

1.	Quality of food & beverages	53	8.1	18	2.8	72	11. 1	212	32. 6	296	45. 5	4.04
2.	Adequate size of food & beverage portions	89	13. 7	13	2.0	136	20. 9	265	40. 7	148	22. 7	3.56

The fourth motivator/dimension investigates if customers leave tipping in order to gain social approval. Through examining the means of scores, it is apparent that only a small percentage of customers agreed that tipping is a tool for gaining social approval (Overall Mean= 2.66), either from employees (M= 2.79) or from companions (M= 2.52).

The fifth motivator/dimension comprised four reasons that examine if customers leave tipping in order to follow social norms and the overall level of agreement regarding this motive was low (Overall Mean= 2.48). As for this dimension, the reason “to follow social norms” recorded the highest mean (M= 2.87), while the reason “to avoid feeling guilty in front of family” recorded the lowest agreement (M= 2.29).

In the sixth motivator/dimension one reason was included to measure customers’ tendency to leave tipping as a way to impress others. Accordingly, most customers (75%) reported their disagreement with the proposition that they leave tipping to express their superiority and power among others (M= 1.70).

The last motivator/dimension was represented by two reasons that examine the extent to which food and beverages quality is influential on customers’ desire to leave tipping and the overall level of agreement regarding this motive was high (Overall Mean= 3.80). In this context, quality of food and beverages was found to have a higher impact on customers’ tendency to leave tipping (M= 4.04), than the impact of providing them with adequate size of food and beverages portions (M= 3.56).

RQ.2. *What is the arrangement of all the reasons and motivators/dimensions in descending order according to the degree of their impact on customers’ willingness to leave tipping?*

Answering this question aims at determining the most as well as the least influential motivators/dimensions and reasons that encourage restaurant customers to leave tipping for service employees. This part differs from the previous part in that it analyzes all 21 reasons cited under different motivators/dimensions in a comprehensive view. Figure 2 and 3 demonstrate the answer for this question in a graphical manner. As apparent in Figure 2, all studied reasons were ranked in a descending order based on customers’ responses. The studied *reasons* were classified by mean value based on customers’ responses into three groups. The first group included the most important reasons that motivate customers’ to leave tipping in Egyptian restaurants with mean value from 3.75 to 5. This group included the following seven reasons; server friendliness (M= 4.38), server attentiveness (M= 4.24), compensating waiters according to the effort they make (M= 4.22), quality of food and beverages (M= 4.04), the standing kind smile of service providers (M= 3.99), speed of service (M= 3.96), and if you are a repeat guest (M= 3.85).

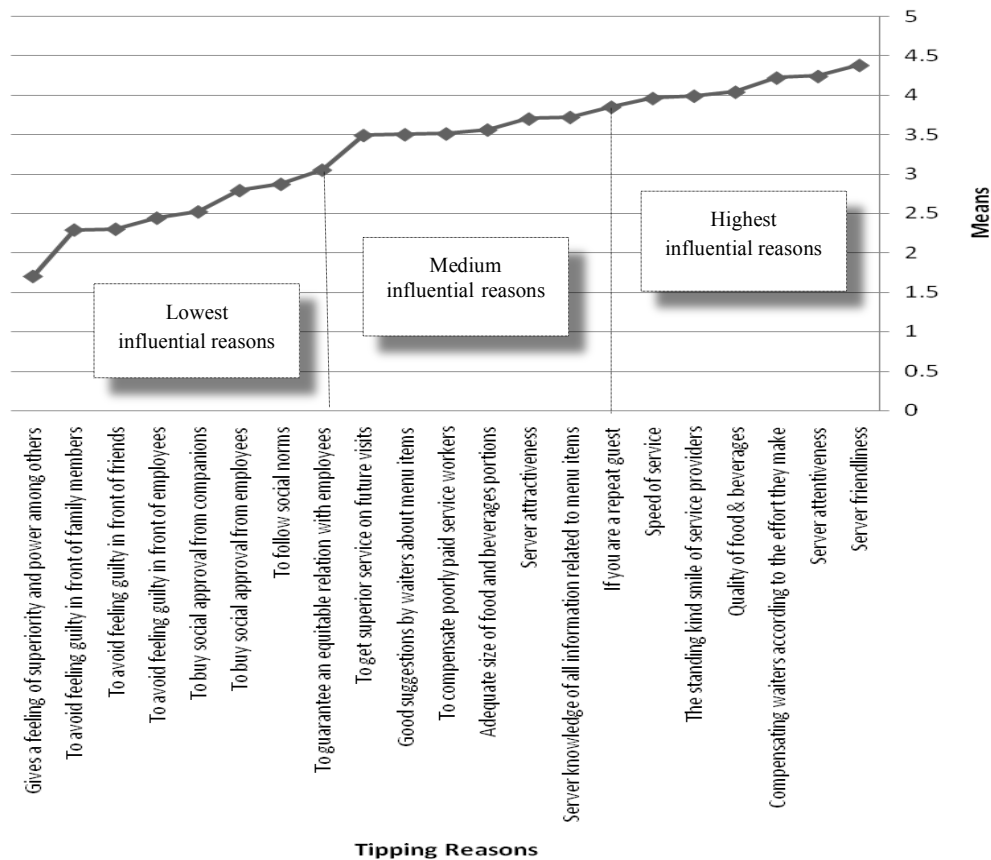


Figure 2: Importance Level of Reasons Influencing Tipping in Egyptian Restaurants

The second group included the reasons that have moderate influence on customers' tendency to leave tipping with mean value from 3.00 to 3.749. This group included the following seven reasons; server knowledge of all information related to menu items ($M= 3.72$), server attractiveness ($M= 3.70$), adequate size of food and beverages portions ($M= 3.56$), to compensate poorly paid service workers ($M= 3.51$), good suggestions by waiters about menu items ($M= 3.50$), to get superior service on future visits ($M= 3.49$), and to guarantee an equitable relation with employees ($M= 3.05$). The third group comprised the lowest influential reasons with mean values from 1 to 2.99. This group included the following reasons; to follow social norms ($M= 2.87$), to buy social approval from employees ($M= 2.79$), to buy social approval from companions ($M= 2.52$), to avoid feeling guilty in front of employees ($M= 2.44$), to avoid feeling guilty in front of friends ($M= 2.30$), to avoid feeling guilty in front of family members ($M= 2.29$), and tipping gives a feeling of superiority and power among others ($M= 1.7$).

Using the same approach, tipping *dimensions* were ranked in a descending order based on overall average of means as shown in Figure 3. According to Egyptian restaurant customers' views, the most important dimension that motivates customers' to leave tipping is to *rewarding good service quality* (Overall Mean= 3.93). Consequently, the dimension *food quality* was the second in importance (Overall Mean= 3.80), followed by *seeking better service in the future* (Overall Mean= 3.67), *assisting service employees* (Overall Mean= 3.59), *gaining social approval* (Overall Mean=

2.66), following social norms (Overall Mean= 2.48), and the desire to impress others reported the least importance among other dimensions (Overall Mean= 1.70).

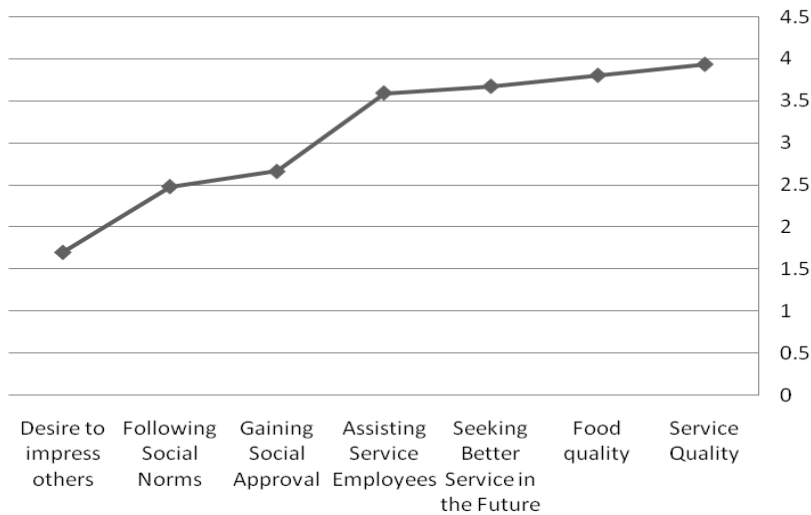


Figure 3: Importance Level of Dimensions Influencing Tipping in Egyptian Restaurants

RQ.3. Do the dimensions that motivate customers to tip differ significantly according to their demographic and behavioral characteristics (gender, social status, with whom/eat out, preferred restaurant type)?

Answering this question aims at determining whether, and to what extent, tipping motivators/dimensions (rewarding good service quality, food quality, seeking better service in the future, assisting service employees, gaining social approval, following social norms and desire to impress others) differs among different customers' profiles. Both demographic and behavioral characteristics of customers were analyzed. The inferential analysis results for these contingent variables using descriptive statistics including means of scores that were compared using Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests resulting in *p*-values are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Differential Analysis of Customers' Profile for Tipping Motives/ Dimensions

Customers' Profile		Motives/Dimensions of Tipping						
		Rewarding Service Quality	Helping Service Employees	Seeking Better Future Service	Gaining Social Approval	Following Social Norms	Desire to Impress Others	Quality of Food and Beverages
1. Gender								
Male	<i>M</i>	3.96	3.56	3.67	2.74	2.43	1.78	3.77
Female	<i>M</i>	3.88	3.67	3.69	2.52	2.56	1.56	3.87

<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		<i>0.064</i>	<i>0.035</i>	<i>0.671</i>	<i>0.040</i>	<i>0.058</i>	<i>0.032</i>	<i>0.318</i>
2. Social Status								
Single	<i>M</i>	3.96	3.65	3.70	2.73	2.34	1.59	4.03
Married	<i>M</i>	3.92	3.58	3.65	2.60	2.50	1.74	3.7094
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		<i>0.659</i>	<i>0.113</i>	<i>0.596</i>	<i>0.167</i>	<i>0.047</i>	<i>0.018</i>	<i>0.000</i>
3. With Whom/eat out								
Alone	<i>M</i>	4.21	3.50	4.25	3.25	2.69	2.00	4.50
With Family	<i>M</i>	3.92	3.62	3.64	2.67	2.51	1.71	3.68
With Friends	<i>M</i>	3.91	3.57	3.72	2.63	2.43	1.69	3.94
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		<i>0.360</i>	<i>0.655</i>	<i>0.089</i>	<i>0.188</i>	<i>0.603</i>	<i>0.950</i>	<i>0.000</i>
4. Preferred Restaurant								
Quick Service	<i>M</i>	3.80	3.54	3.64	2.64	2.38	1.67	3.80
Casual Dining	<i>M</i>	3.90	3.54	3.54	2.43	2.48	1.52	3.74
Fine Dining	<i>M</i>	4.00	3.70	3.92	3.02	2.38	1.94	3.73
National Dining	<i>M</i>	3.92	3.66	3.71	2.62	2.46	1.65	3.78
<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</i>		<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.021</i>	<i>0.008</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.087</i>	<i>0.000</i>	<i>0.068</i>

M. = Mean

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Firstly, the comparison between mean scores reported for male and female customers' regarding tipping motivators/dimensions revealed slight differences. Accordingly, motives that encourage male customers to tip more than females are; rewarding service quality, gaining social approval, and desire to impress others. On the other hand, motives that encourage female customers to tip more than males are; helping service employees, seeking better future service, following social norms and

quality of food and beverages. Results of the Mann-Whittney test revealed significant differences between male and female customers ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in three of the seven motives namely, helping service employees ($p\text{-value} = 0.035$), gaining social approval ($p\text{-value} = 0.040$), and desire to impress others ($p\text{-value} = 0.032$).

Secondly, results indicated that the tipping motives that are more important for single than for married customers are; rewarding service quality, helping service employees, seeking better future service and gaining social approval. Conversely, motives that influence married customers to tip more than singles are; following social norms and desire to impress others. Consequently, in order to correlate the customers' social status with different tipping motives, means of the different tipping motivations were compared utilizing Mann-Whittney test. With a significance of (0.05), there are significant differences between single and married customers in two of the seven motives namely, quality of food and beverages ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$) and desire to impress others ($p\text{-value} = 0.018$). However, there are no significant differences among other motives ($p\text{-values} > 0.05$).

Thirdly, calculated mean scores confirmed that all the tipping motives have greater influence and more importance for customers' who prefer to eat out alone than those who prefer to eat out either with family or with friends. Additionally, slight differences were recorded in the motivation to leave tipping between those who prefer to dine out with family members and those who prefer to dine out with friends. Concerning this behavioral characteristic of respondents, results of the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences between customers ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in one of the seven motives namely, quality of food and beverages ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$). However, there are no significant differences among other motives ($p\text{-values} > 0.05$). As for the type of restaurant preferred, the comparison of different means resulted in the following conclusions. Rewarding service quality was found to be the most important tipping motivator for different types of restaurant customers. On the other hand, the desire to impress others was found to be the least important motive to leave tipping from different customers' point of view. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed significant differences between customers ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$) in five of the seven motives namely, rewarding good service quality ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$), quality of food and beverages ($p\text{-value} = 0.021$), seeking better service in the future ($p\text{-value} = 0.008$), assisting service employees ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$), and desire to impress others ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$). However, no significant differences were recorded between other motives ($p\text{-values} > 0.05$).

RQ.4. Is there a correlation between the different motivators/dimensions that motivate the tipping behaviour of Egyptian restaurant customers?

On the one hand, the strongest positive relationship was recorded between the dimension of rewarding service quality and three other dimensions namely; food and beverages quality ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$, with a correlation magnitude of 64.9 %), seeking better future service ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$, with a correlation magnitude of 60.9 %), and the desire to help service employees ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$, with a correlation magnitude of 59.5 %). Other strong relationships were recorded between the following dimensions; seeking better future service and the desire to help service employees ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$, with a correlation magnitude of 56.5 %), following social norms and gaining social approval ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$, with a correlation magnitude of 51.4 %), and gaining social approval and the desire to

impress others (p -value < 0.01 , with a correlation magnitude of 50.8 %). On the hand, many of the reported relationships between the tipping dimensions were weak ($r < 0.5$), as reported in Table 5.

7. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Additionally, results are made clear and further justified through presenting supporting previous researches and researcher's insights where applicable. The *first* objective of this research was to study the different theorized reasons and motives that motivate customers to tip and to investigate their conformity with Egyptian restaurants customers' point of view. Therefore, twenty one theorized reasons to leave tipping were derived from the literature and categorized under seven motivators/dimensions. Afterwards, these reasons were evaluated from Egyptian restaurant customers' point of view to identify the reasons that best explain their motivation to leave tipping. When examined from a descending mean value perspective, rewarding service quality recorded the highest importance among other motivators/dimensions when it comes to explain customers' tipping motivations. Additionally, Egyptian customers ranked the quality of food and beverages as the second most important motivator/dimension that influences their desire to leave tipping. Previous research has confirmed this result by scrutinizing the positive impact of food and beverage quality on tipping behaviour (e.g., Medler-Liraz, 2012; Lynn and Latané, 1984). This result proves that food and beverage quality is a very important influential motivator for Egyptians to leave tipping. The third highly ranked motivator/dimension among others is seeking better service in future visits. In the same vein, Egyptian customers indicated that they are motivated tip primarily if they are repeat guests, followed by the desire to get superior service on future visits. This result goes in line with available literature reviews regarding the positive influence of seeking better future service on customers' desirability to leave tipping (e.g., Azar, 2004; Bodvarsson and Gibson, 1997; Lynn and Grassman, 1990; Ben-Zion and Karni, 1977). The dimension assisting service employees was ranked the fourth in importance among other dimensions. Under this dimension compensating waiters according to the effort they make was the most important reason that stimulates customers' desire to tip restaurant employees. This desire to help service employees was one of the most common motives for tipping reported by customers' in previous researches (e.g., Lynn, 2009; Jewell, 2008; Azar, 2004; Videbeck, 2004; Speer, 1997).

Table 5: Correlation Analysis of Tipping Motives/Dimensions

Tipping Motives/Dimensions		Rewarding Service Quality	Helping Service Employees	Seeking Better Future Service	Gaining Social Approval	Following Social Norms	Desire to Impress Others	Quality of Food and Beverages
Rewarding Service Quality	Pearson Correlation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)							

Helping Service Employees	Pearson Correlation	0.595**	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000						
Seeking Better Future Service	Pearson Correlation	0.609**	0.565**	-	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000					
Gaining Social Approval	Pearson Correlation	0.347**	0.295**	0.364**	-	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000				
Following Social Norms	Pearson Correlation	0.090*	0.095*	0.108**	0.514**	-	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.021	0.016	0.006	0.000			
Desire to Impress Others	Pearson Correlation	0.129**	0.145**	0.162**	0.508**	0.485**	-	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Quality of Food and Beverages	Pearson Correlation	0.649**	0.454**	0.432**	0.411**	0.313**	0.237**	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Other studied motivators/dimensions appeared to have either moderate (gaining social approval and following social norms) or low (the desire to impress others) influence on Egyptian restaurant customers' tendency to leave tipping. This result doesn't conform to previous researches which confirmed the positive influence of these dimensions on customers' willingness to leave tipping to service employees (e.g., Becker, et al., 2012; Saunders and Lynn, 2010; Azar, 2004, 2007, 2010; Parrett, 2006; Lynn, 2001; Bodvarsson and Gibson, 1997; Lynn, 1997; Lynn and Grassman, 1990). Finally, it can be concluded that the most important tipping motives for Egyptian restaurant customers are; to reward service quality, food and beverage quality, seeking better service in future visits and the desire to help service employees. Conversely, the least important tipping motives for Egyptian restaurant customers are; gaining social approval, following social norms and the desire to impress others.

The *second* objective of this research was to investigate if there are differences in customers' perceptions of the tipping motivators/dimensions among different types of customers. Taken together, results suggest that rewarding service quality, gaining social approval, and the desire to

impress others are more important tipping motivators/dimensions for male rather than for female customers. On the other hand, helping service employees, seeking better future service, following social norms and quality of food and beverages are more important tipping motivators/dimensions for female rather than for male customers. Secondly, rewarding service quality, helping service employees, seeking better future service and gaining social approval are more important tipping motivators/dimensions for single rather than for married customers. Conversely, motives that influence married customers to tip more than singles are following social norms and the desire to impress others. Thirdly, all the tipping motives are more important for customers' who prefer to eat out alone than for those who prefer to eat out either with family or with friends. Finally, rewarding service quality was found to be the most important tipping motivator/dimension for different types of restaurant customers. On the other hand, the desire to impress others was found to be the least important motive to leave tipping from different customers' point of view. The *last* objective of this research was to test the correlation between the different dimensions that motivate Egyptian restaurant customers to leave tipping. Results supported the existence of a significant and positive relationship between all the tipping dimensions. Therefore, these results conform to previous researches that confirmed the multidimensional nature of tipping motivators/dimensions (Lynn and McCall, 2000; Azar, 2007, 2010; Lynn, 2009). The strongest positive relationship was recorded between the dimension of rewarding service quality and the dimension of food and beverages quality.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although there are a sufficient number of researches about tipping, there is a lack of a concrete measure that would evaluate its dimensions and determinants. The researchers can relate this problem to the fact that tipping customs and norms differ between countries. For example, in some countries tipping is socially acceptable, and often is an important part of employees' income. While in other countries tipping isn't expected and isn't part of the culture. Due to these enormous variances in tipping customs and norms between countries, future researchers should continue to work towards advancing our understanding of these variations and conduct cross-cultural studies to designate different measurement tools suitable for different cultural contexts. Other aspects that should be further investigated in future research are; a focus on employees' opinions and comparing them with those of customers, a focus on non-restaurant service contexts (e.g., hotels, casinos, taxi drivers, beach boys, parking valets, tour guides, etc.) and a focus on the differences in customers' perceptions of the tipping behavior among different types of customers.

9. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Another important recommendation for restaurant managers is to be aware of the fact that in many Egyptian restaurants customers does not know who is the employee in charge of their service especially after the order is taken what makes the customer does not feel attention. Additionally, a different employee may provide the service every time it is required what results in inconsistency of the level of service being provided. Therefore, there is a need for restaurant manager to assign specific servers to different stations within the restaurant, this action will give employees a direct

guest contact as well as increased responsibility for customer care. On the other side the customer will receive a consistent and attentive service which will result in increased tips for employees.

Furthermore, understanding the motivators/dimensions that stimulates customers' desire to tip will help in designating training programs for service employees. Restaurant managers should implement these training programs to make employees aware of the most important reasons that motivate customers to leave tipping. Another important part of this training program should focus on the difference in tipping motives among different customers' profiles. This refers to the fact that what motivates a certain customer to tip may not motivate another customer. For example, results indicated that food and beverage quality is more important in influencing tipping tendency than service quality for single customers and those who dine alone.

On the other hand, service quality is more important in influencing tipping tendency than any other reason for those customers who dine in the presence of their family members. The training program should also focus on how to stop the famous phenomenon of asking for tipping known in Egyptian restaurants either directly or through some actions that make the customer feel that he/she is obliged to leave tipping such as; over thanking, trying to notify the guest that tipping will let him/her receive better service in future visits, contrived welcoming words, non-natural smiles and prolonged looks. Restaurant managers should educate and train their employees to avoid these bad behaviors that lead to a state of aversion in the minds of customers because they feel that tipping is a basic rule of the service. Employees should be learned that the tipping is a giveaway from the guest to the server who showed intimacy and respect and went the extra mile to over satisfy the guest in a normal way and without showing that he is doing so just to get the tips. A final part of the training program is to teach employees that they are working in a very sensitive field, which depends primarily on the superior treatment with guests through the use of technical and professional terms, which makes them feel that they are dealing with individuals who are highly experienced and familiar with this profession. This is among the most important factors which broadcast confidence between customers and service employees and consequently motivates them to leave higher tips.

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Tourism Marketing and Projection Mapping

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is considered a multi- sector of activities that combines the offer of services and goods. It creates great chances for economic and social development in the touristic destinations. Main characteristics of modern tourism are the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the appearance of new forms of tourism like cultural tourism and city breaks. Concepts like cultural heritage and sustainability have started being important factors for the destination decision making by modern tourists. Light festivals are a new touristic product that combines cultural tourism and urban tourism. Its main component is projection mapping. Projection mapping is a special technique of usage of video projectors which uses non-ordinary surfaces for display. Projection mapping in essence is a combination of art (through light) and technology (through video). It is a mean of creation of cultural products and it has the potential to become a mean of creation of touristic products. Projection mapping can promote the cultural heritage of a place through an easy and impressive manner in accordance with the current tourism marketing trends that focus in touristic packages that provide many strong experiences in a few days. The integration of projection mapping inside the frame of a completed tourism marketing planning could offer a competitive advantage in places which seeks to enrich their touristic product and achieve sustainable development by offering authentic experiences to modern tourist.

Key Words: Tourism marketing, projection mapping, cultural tourism, light festival

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered one of the biggest sectors of global economy. It has presented exceptional growth during 20th century and forth. The 25 million of tourists worldwide in 1950 rose to 278 million in 1980, 674 million in 2000 and 1,186 million in 2015. The arrivals of tourists internationally are expected to be increased by an average of 3.3% per year the period 2010- 2030 and this conducts that we estimate 1.4 billion tourists in 2020 and 1.8 billion in 2030 (WTO, 2015).

Projection mapping is a modern application that combines projection of an audio-visual content in several alternative surfaces. It is considered an artistic creation and consists the main application in most light festivals worldwide. The last twenty years have been developed over 100 light festivals in several cities around the world. These events attract thousands of people who visit the host cities and usually combine the participation in a light festival with urban tourism.

Thus, projection mapping is a cultural product which can be transformed into a touristic product either inside the frame of light festivals or outside of them if a proper tourism marketing policy is designed and implemented. The methodological approach of the present work will be the bibliographic research in international bibliography, in hard copy and electronic version. The aim is to examine the possibilities of the usage of projection mapping inside the frame of touristic marketing as an alternative touristic product in order to: (i) enrich the touristic content of a destination, (ii) to promote the cultural heritage of touristic destinations and (iii) to enhance touristic development.

TOURISM AND CULTURE: COMMUNICATING VESSELS

Tourism is a complex, global, social, cultural and economic phenomenon and on the same time it is a multi- level field where several versions of economic development are interconnected each other (Panagiotopoulos et al. 2016). Tourism industry is a big group of several other industries that directly can provide goods or services to facilitate business, pleasure and leisure activities for people who are temporarily away from their home environment. It is defined as the sum of organizations of private and public sector that contribute in the development, production, promotion and forwarding of products and services that cover the needs of tourists (Gee et al, 1997). Tourism industry includes several parts like: i) tourist accommodation, ii) food and beverage sector, iii) transportation companies, iv) recreation facilities, v) places of unique natural beauty, vi) intermediate tourism businesses, vii) travel agencies, viii) tour operators and ix) public support services (Vasilakakis, 2014).

A significant key factor for a success story in tourism is considered the existence of a variety of touristic products for the same destination. As touristic product is considered every tangible or intangible product created in order to satisfy needs or wishes of modern global citizens (Lagos, 2005).

The most important trends and evolutions in tourism are below (Kokkosis, 2016):

- Globalization and expansion of touristic markets
- Globalization and increased competition
- Technology and Information

- Personalized need and special interests- Lifestyle
- Demand for new diversified products- Segmentation of the market
- Pursuit of authentic experiences in touristic destinations
- More trips of shorter duration
- Special and alternative forms of tourism

Authenticity is a stable trend in tourism the last decades and it is described as willingness for gaining new experiences, for acquiring new products and for enjoying new services that are all connected with the destination as much as possible. Authenticity means pureness that conducts less commercialization, less massive culture and less globalized influences. Consumerism has dominated modern people's life and a part of them seeks for new meaning in life as a step forward to self- actualization (Wilmott and Nelson, 2003). The answer to the satiation of consumerism is authenticity and vacation is the chance for people to discover a new world. Brass (2006) connects authenticity with the preservation of locality and finally with sustainability and describes it as human's inner potential to know better himself though meeting another culture and obtaining real experiences.

The above notices direct the specialists in tourism in certain targets which are the i) the qualitative upgrade of touristic product and ii) its expansion and enrichment. This seems to be the case for all touristic destinations worldwide. For example, Mediterranean countries like Greece, seek to escape from the classical concept of "Sun and Sea" in order to i) face the international competition, ii) increase the annual touristic period, iii) satisfy modern tourist's needs, iv) attract tourism of high income. Therefore, activities that are not seasonal and special forms of tourism have come in the spotlight like spa tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, sports tourism, gastronomic tourism, urban tourism, cruise, etc. (Kokkossis, 2016). Most of them are characterized by a theme and are strongly connected with the culture of the destination.

The concept of culture is complicated and multifarious and has met several and different interpretations over time (Uscatescu, 1973). Culture as a general and wide concept includes the sum of activities and materials made by human kind in social, economic, spiritual, mental, and emotional level (Georgitsogianni, 2011: 11). Furthermore, as cultural products are defined those which keep a significant archaeological, historical, scientific and aesthetic value and they have been categorized and counted with accuracy (Grammatikaki- Alexiou, et al., 2001: 35). The characteristics that should be present in such products are authenticity, quality, historicity and symbolism (Government Newspaper of Greece, 2002).

Cultural heritage is considered an asset closely connected with touristic growth for a place (Mitoula, 2003). Proper designed cultural policies and activities could contribute in the development of cultural tourism and consequently in the development of local communities. Cultural tourism can be the lever for economic, social and cultural progress in a community, especially now that is well known that concepts like "Sun and Sea" and "Massive Tourism" are considered old fashioned and against the principles of sustainable development.

The main components that constitute cultural tourism are: i) places of heritage, ii) art places like theatres, iii) visual art places like galleries, iv) special events like light festivals, v) places with significant religious value, vi) local communities, vii) customs and traditions, viii) arts and crafts,

ix) language and dialects, x) gastronomy, xi) industry and trade, xii) modern folk culture, xiii) activities of special interest like weaving and xiv) places of natural beauty (Defner, 2016).

However, the interconnection between tourism and culture is not a new idea. A lot of researches indicate that cultural heritage is a powerful motivation for a big group of tourists. For example, 80% of American tourists, 90% of tourists from Latin America and 93% of Japanese tourists mentioned that they have selected Europe because of its cultural heritage. Indicatively, the tourists that make a choice of a destination based on its cultural heritage are from Japan (92%), America (55%), Spain (50%) and Great Britain (49.7%) (Koussounis, 2004).

PROJECTION MAPPING AND LIGHT FESTIVALS

Projection mapping in essence is a combination of art (through light) and technology (through video). Projection mapping is a special technique of usage of video projectors that presents artistic content on several non-compatible surfaces. The projection does not use special flat surfaces made for this purpose but several natural objects. This fact has as a result the possibility of selection among a variety of choices with whatever shape and outline that can be used as a display. Through this technique, objects of real world are transformed into intangible forms and this changes the way we consider them. Projection mapping could be categorized based on the content or the kind of the surface used or on the purpose of the projection. Its content is rich and varies from historic topics up to visual effects and illusions made by taking advantage from the special characteristics of the projection surfaces (Panos, 2016).

The possible usages are a lot and they depend on the place of the projection, the selected objects for the display, the target-group, the content and the purpose of the projection. All these factors should be taken into consideration for the organization of a projection mapping event. Furthermore, projection mapping is present in arts like in theatre and dancing, and in advertisements and commercial events. Projection mapping is used in marketing and promotions policies by using as surface products like a car or a mannequin (Panos, 2016).

The buildings that are usually used for projection mapping are public buildings with unique architecture that belong in city's cultural heritage. The highlighting of cultural heritage of a city through events with projection mapping can contribute to public's information for its value, its preservation and exploitation in accordance with sustainability principles.

An important cornerstone of projection mapping is its widely-spread use in cultural events and mainly in light festivals. Projection mapping consists the main activity and application in light festivals worldwide. Projection mapping events are impressive and can create pleasant memories to an attendant. On parallel projection mapping experiences could have the strong and valuable characteristic of authenticity of their content if they match it with the selected projection surface. Authenticity is a crucial factor for the touristic product of a place since it can distinguish it among other competitors.

Events with projection mapping are organized either as a single event or as part of a bigger group of events that form a festival. The development and the spread of such festivals is impressive since there are already worldwide more than 100 light festivals which are even organized in international networks (Giordano and Ong, 2017). Light festival is considered as an innovative new product with artistic value and one of the most successful of them is "Fête des Lumières" in Lyon in France. The

experience accumulated year by year allowed to its organizers to establish an international network of cities and lighting professionals who organize a series of light festivals called Lighting Urban Community International – LUCI (LUCI Association, xx). Another example is the light festival of Eindhoven in Holland which created an organization called International Light Organization – ILO and operates as a community of artists who organize light festivals all over the world (ILO, xx).

In the everyday activity of such organizations is included communication with light designers, artists, committees of conferences, municipalities, etc. in order to continue to innovate and expand light festivals in more places. The organization of light festivals should be adopted in the special characteristics of each city and its design should take into consideration local authorities and businessmen. The biggest advantages of these organizations are: i) their accumulated experience, ii) the know-how, and iii) the connections with artists and light designers internationally. The preparation of a light festival demands the cooperation of a lot of people with several specializations. Projection mapping that is the heart of such events demands interdisciplinary cooperation including artists, architects, graphics designers, managers specialized in areas like marketing, finance, tourism and cultural management especially in case that this festival uses the history and the cultural heritage of the venue (Panos, 2016).

A common practice regarding the organization of light festivals is the copy- paste method of a festival in several cities based on the linear absorption without adjustments due to different local characteristics. This fact has resulted in the application of an innovative product in a new place without the element of authenticity (Giordano and Ong, 2017). Common choices regarding the content of projection mapping are historical subjects but also artistic, fuzzy and abstract creations of contemporary art. A video is kind of story telling with linear or not structure. The usage of mapping projection could expand the possibilities of this narration by selecting different surfaces from the projection. When there is absence of narrative techniques, the use of artistic, abstract content could give very impressive results and feelings of satisfaction and happiness to the attendants.

CONCLUSIONS- SUGGESTIONS

Extremely important parameters of modern tourism are communication and information because tourism by definition is a way of communication between human and the rest of the world. It consists an experiential process of collecting information, experiences and memories. Suwantoro (2001) emphasizes that the trip for a tourist starts from the moment he left his home in order to travel to the selected destination and ends upon his return at home. This is an important element for the understanding of tourism industry. However, nowadays, the first contact of a tourist with his destination and the decision making about it, starts probably much earlier through Information and Communication Technologies (ITC) and not anymore through word of mouth (Panagiotopoulos et al. 2016). The modern tourist searches for new destinations to explore through internet by using tablets, mobiles phones and personal computers and by visiting websites like Pinterest. Furthermore, word of mouth has been replaced by the photos that friends upload in Instagram and Facebook when they are on their trip (on real time).

Tourism could be an effective power for growth but it is easily its prospects to be wasted. It is very common, tourism destinations to copy ideas without adjusting them in their needs and characteristics like in the case of light festivals and finally to copy each other. This makes tourists to

fail to escape from their routine since they did not discover real prototype experiences. A destination should protect and promote strongly its culture, its customs, its gastronomy and its natural beauty and even its human capital. Authenticity does not drive directly to sustainability but without the honor of local distinctiveness a destination looks like the previous one (Yeoman, 2008: 174, Yeoman et al., 2007)

Projection mapping could easily be part of a cultural tourism policy because it is related with historical resources (ancient monuments, etc.), cultural, anthropogenic and recreational resources (light festivals, etc.). Projection mapping integrated in a well-organized cultural production inside the frame of a total touristic marketing planning could obtain characteristics of a communication experience, exchange of cultures, authenticity and sense and feeling of the place. It is a cultural good that could be easily used as touristic good. It is suitable for those types of tourists that are interested for cultural experiences and city breaks and put high priority in the cultural criterion for their destination decision making. On the same time, it's use can be in accordance with the global trend which pushes people to make more trips of shorter duration than in the past and to pursuit many experiences in a short time.

The production of videos for projection mapping could be included in marketing strategies for the promotion of a place as a touristic destination. The content of such videos could be renewed in periodic basis in order to diversify its messages every time there are changes in the relevant marketing policy. The duration of these projections is small and this characteristic makes them suitable for touristic use since modern tourists look for a lot of fast experiences instead of fewer experience of bigger time in accordance with the optimal effective use of "Gazinta Philosophy" (Burns, 1993).

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The Role of Semiotics in Tourism Destination Branding through Social Media: The Case of Switzerland

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the use of semiotics in the branding of Switzerland as a tourism destination through social media, and specifically via Facebook. Destination branding has assumed an increasing importance over the past few years, and social media and semiotics have facilitated its rise. Semiotics corresponds to visible signs that, in this context, may be deployed as a means of attracting a customer's attention and its effective utilisation can make a difference to a destination's choice. Moreover, the branding of a destination may be effected through social media. It is a relatively cost-effective way to promote a destination and attempt to attract visitors. A conceptual framework was developed and content analysis was applied to 200 images uploaded by Switzerland Tourism on its Facebook page (DMO-uploaded and user-generated content) in order to identify the recurrent categories of attributes visible in imagery propagated. The findings indicated that around half the images had Nature & Landscape, Architecture/Buildings and People attributes. The investigation also highlighted that 22 Swiss cantons out of 26 were represented in the sample and that nearly half of the images were captured in Bern, Graubünden and Valais. Finally, the investigation provided four recommendations to Switzerland Tourism to improve its destination branding strategy on social media by using semiotics, such as to continue to upload images containing thematic concerns of escape, freedom and authenticity and to include their logo and slogan in the images. The research also pointed out interesting areas for further research.

Key Words: tourism destination, branding, semiotics, social media, Switzerland

INTRODUCTION

Over the past six decades, the tourism industry has grown exponentially and diversified, becoming one of the world's most dynamic and rapidly expanding business sectors. The World Tourism Organization reported that world export earnings generated by the tourism industry amounted to USD 1.5 trillion, a record amount (UNWTO 2015b). It also represents nine percent of global GDP, and accounts for one in eleven jobs (UNWTO 2015c).

Due to the extraordinary growth of the industry, and to globalisation, the competition between tourism destinations has correspondingly increased. Kiralova and Pavlicecka argued that destinations are "territories, geographical areas, such as a country, an island or town", where "people travel and where they choose to stay for a certain period" and where "a combination of all products, services and experiences are provided locally" (Kiralova and Pavlicecka 2015, p359). Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) have consequently grown in importance, their goal being to attract more visitors to their destination, and to generate more income. Every destination has a unique heritage, sites or culture (Morgan and Pritchard 2004), and DMOs have attempted to exploit these assets through engaging in new promotion strategies such as tourism destination branding. Through such differentiation, the DMOs hope to achieve a competitive advantage in one of the most fiercely competitive sectors of the global economy. They aim to establish a unique brand identity and brand image to provide visitors with positive initial impressions of the destination, and hopefully, to ultimately influence their holiday destination choice.

To brand and promote destinations, DMOs create advertising campaigns, which include destination logos, short messages, images, specific colours, sounds or more generally, any kind of signs. These signs, analysable through semiotic theory, attempt to capture the attention of potential visitors through engaging with the observer's ability to recognise and receive such patterns, codes and sub textual information (Chandler 2007). These campaigns, if competently executed, aim to stimulate the development of the destination and brand awareness, increase the latter's brand recognition, influence visitor perceptions, and develop positive associations with the brand/destination (Oswald 2007). Another strategy commonly used nowadays is the promotion of destinations through social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram or TripAdvisor, which allow individual users and DMOs to communicate, interact and exchange information with each other. This represents a valuable marketing tool for DMOs because they can easily share messages, videos and images of their destinations to market destinations to potential visitors.

This research focuses on Switzerland as a tourism destination. The country is mainly characterised by its desirable location and climate and abundant and visually appealing natural resources. The research was undertaken with the object of analysing the use of semiotics in the branding of Switzerland through the Facebook page of its DMO, Switzerland Tourism. Content analysis was developed and conducted by analysing 200 images collected through a random sampling on the Facebook page of Switzerland Tourism over the course of 2015. The aim of this was to identify the main categories of attributes observed in the uploaded images, which were used to brand the destination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding

Branding is considered as a key element in the marketing strategies of organisations because it provides them valuable features and allows them to obtain a competitive advantage (Lynch and de Chernatony 2004). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a "name, term, design,

symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association 2015). However, as Jevons stated (2005, p117), this definition is not service oriented and does not include "intangible components or consumer perceptions". The definition provided by the European Brands Association can consequently complement the American definition: "a brand is the sum of [the consumer] knowledge and understanding of a product, service or company, and provides the means for exercising choice and preference. Over time, a product or service may develop in an individual's mind to become familiar, recognisable, reassuring, unique and trust inspiring - in other words, a strong brand" (European Brands Association 2015). The analysis of this second definition shows that a brand is not only characterised by a symbol or a logo. A brand aims to share emotional values with its customers by communicating to them about itself, about its culture and its products or services (European Brands Association 2015; Lynch and de Chernatony 2004; Dinnie 2008).

Destination Branding

The degree of interest shown by tourists in the end-destination of their trip(s) has increased in recent years, accompanied by ever-increasing levels of competitiveness within the travel industry (Baker and Cameron 2008; Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005; Buhalis 2000). The purpose of Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) is to attract both more visitors and investors to certain global travel destinations, but also to increase awareness about the destinations. Destinations are open to promotion and branding in much the same way as products and services, with the objective of "mak(ing) people aware of the location and then link(ing) desirable associations to create a favourable image to entice visits and businesses" (Baker and Cameron 2008, p86).

Blain, Levy and Ritchie define destination branding as the "marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice" (Blain, Levy and Ritchie 2005, p337).

Finally, social media plays an undeniably powerful role in destination branding and it constitutes an important strategy for the DMOs (Kiralova and Pavlicecka 2015). DMOs should create their own online community to engage visitors, encourage interactions (between visitors and potential visitors or between visitors and DMOs for example) and share with them experiences and interesting/relevant content. the benefits of social media for tourism destination branding are numerous and "can be summed up as follows: (1) (favourable) ROI; (2) increase of the number of visitors; (3) increase of positive awareness; (4) increase of destination preference; (5) awards; (6) publicity; (7) rise of website hits; (8) increase of number of website and Facebook referrals; (9) increase of number of Facebook fans; (10) user generated content; (11) acquisition of new ambassadors for the destination; (12) public relations" (Kiral'ova and Pavličeka 2015, p363).

Semiotics

Semiotics, also called semiology, is the study and the science of signs (Berger 2014; Tresidder and Hirst 2012; Chandler 2007; Oswald 2012). Differing definitions of semiotics exist. Mick, for example, in 1986 stated that signs are understood and simply represented by "anything that stands for something (its object), to somebody (interpreter), in some respect (its context)" (Mick 1986, p198). Eco offered an alternative definition: "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign" (Eco 1976, p7 in Chandler no date). Finally, semiotics can also be defined as "the study of signs and systems of representation" (Tresidder and Hirst 2012, p153).

Therefore, everything represented by words, language, images, actions or objects are considered as signs (Chandler 2007, Echtner 1999). Nevertheless, these have no intrinsic meaning (Chandler 2007) unless we endow them with one; once this occurs, they become signs. In addition, their interpretation is also contingent on the perceptions of the observer: this may differ from one person to another, depending on a broad range of factors including culture, market segmentation or lifestyle (Tresidder and Hirst 2012).

Although semiotics is not a recent discipline, Chandler states that no “widely agreed theoretical assumptions, models or empirical methodologies” (Chandler 2007, p4) have yet been developed to study signs. He adds that “semiotics has tended to be largely theoretical” and “many of its theorists are seeking to establish its scope and general principles” (Chandler 2007, p4). Current research tries to categorise the codes and signs to provide a better understanding of semiotics, but this is proving to be a complex endeavour, as semiotics includes elements of linguistics, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology, aesthetics, etc. (Echtner 1999; Chandler 2007; Oswald 2012).

Two authors are acclaimed to be the “fathers” of semiotic analysis: the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Chandler 2007; Tresidder and Hirst 2012). They developed two dominant contemporary and theoretical models that remain helpful tools to analyse signs and symbols. Roland Barthes utilised and expanded on Saussure’s model to determine that meaning has different levels.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ferdinand de Saussure stated in his *Course in General Linguistics* that semiology is a science “which studies the role of signs as part of social life” (Chandler 2007, p2). He formulated a binary model to define the linguistic signs, which are composed of the signified and the signifier (Oswald 2012; Chandler 2007). The model is summarized in the Figure 2 below. On one hand, the signifier is a material or physical form of the sign. It means that the signifier “is something which can be seen, heard, touched, smelled or tasted” (Chandler 2007, p15). It is also called the “sound pattern” (Chandler 2007, p14). On the other hand, the signified is the concept that the signifier tends to represent in the mind of people (a mental construct, a notion). The sign is obtained thanks to the association of the two elements of the Saussure’s model. This relationship between the signified and the signifier is termed the signification, and is represented by the two arrows in Figure 5. The signification and the meaning of the sign can change depending on the context and the person as the relation is “arbitrary and based on convention” (Berger 2014, p22). The role of social code or the culture of the observers also impact the meaning of the sign. Finally, this model is useful to analyse brand logos or symbols (Oswald 2012).

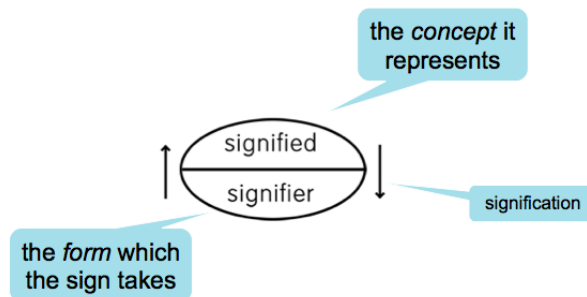


Figure 2: Representation of Saussure’s model (Source: Based on Saussure 1967, p.158)

At the same time as Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce developed an alternative model of the sign. According to Peirce, people think only through signs and he defines signs as a combination of three elements (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2010). Firstly, the representamen is understood as the form (materiality or immateriality) taken by the sign because it represents something (Chandler 2007). In Saussure’s model, it corresponds to the signifier. Secondly, the representamen enters in relation with the object, which corresponds to a representation beyond the

sign (also called the referent). The inclusion of the object illustrates the main difference between this model and the model of Saussure. Thirdly, the interpretant represents the “sense made by the sign” (Dahlstrom and Somayaji 2003; Chandler 2007, p29) and the interpretation of the sign that people have in their mind. A parallel with the signified in Saussure’s model can be drawn. In addition, all three elements interact with each other in a triangle (Echtner 1999) and, in the words of Chandler, the sign is “a unity of what is represented (the object), how it is represented (the representamen) and how it is interpreted (the interpretant)” (Chandler 2007, p29). The triangle is shown in the following figure. The relation between the representamen and the object is a broken line because there is no clear “observable and direct relationship” between the two elements (Chandler 2007, p30).

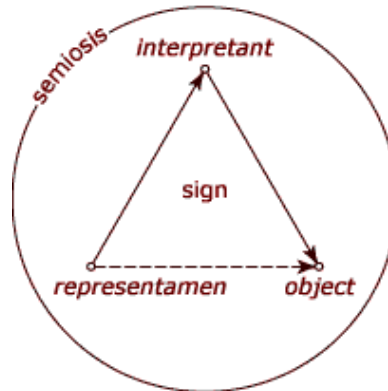


Figure 3: Combination of the three elements of the sign (Dahlstrom and Somayaji 2003)

Based on the model of Pierce, Echtner (1999) adapted the semiotic triangle to tourism destinations. The representamen (designatum) corresponds to the tourism destination. Then, advertisements are created to promote the destination and to transfer meanings to the customers. They include signs, logos, images or text, for instance. The advertisements correspond therefore to the object (sign), and the visitors to the interpretants. Figure 7 illustrates the semiotic triangle for the tourism industry.

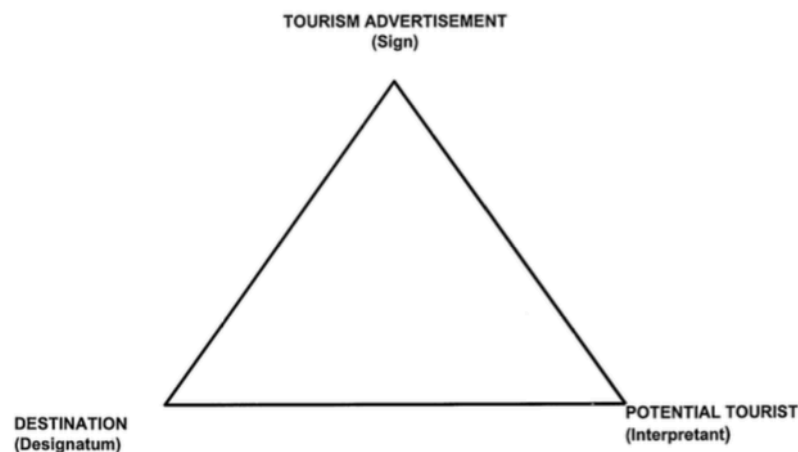


Figure 4: The semiotic triangle for the tourism industry (Echtner 1999, p53)

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss the research methodology, principally content analysis. It attempts to analyse and identify which categories of semiotics and attributes are used in images posted by Switzerland Tourism on Facebook to promote Switzerland as a tourism destination. In addition, this chapter includes an analysis of the methods used in the collection of primary data, as well as the procedure followed to develop the attributes' categories and to code the data.

Content analysis

Content analysis is generally used to analyse textual materials, but it can also be utilised as a research technique to study the characteristics of advertisements and images, because it “aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time” (Lasswell, Lerner, and Pool 1952, cited in Stepchenkova, Kirilenko, and Morrison 2009, p455). Berelson defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Berelson 1971, cited in Anderson, Dewhirst, and Ling 2006, p257). Similarly, Kerlinger (1986, in Binsbergen, 2013) articulates content analysis as “a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner for measuring variables”.

In the abovementioned definitions, the three italicised words express the key elements of content analysis (Anderson, Dewhirst, and Ling 2006). Firstly, objectivity is the “avoidance of (conscious) bias and subjective selection during the conduct and reporting of research” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012, p676). This means that the data collection must be structured, consistent and adhere to strict rules. In the case of content analysis, a list of attributes should be defined before collecting the data to construct the basis of the investigation. The objectivity of the researcher(s) is important as it has the potential to affect the quality of the research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012). When coding the results in the case of several researchers, they “should secure highly replicable and reproducible results and arrive at similar conclusions” (Anderson, Dewhirst, and Ling 2006, p257). This serves to avoid misrepresentations in data collection and the risk of errors in the findings. Secondly, as “scientific problems or hypotheses are examined” (Anderson, Dewhirst, and Ling 2006, p257), systematisation is necessary to ensure consistency, especially in the procedures to follow when coding the data, and in the random sample selection. The results should be generalizable. Thirdly, quantification means that data is correctly coded into different pre-defined categories to attain statistically accurate results. The numerical results from the sample can be generalised to the whole population (of images or texts) and thus the researcher may “derive patterns in the analysis and reporting of information” (Vitouladiti 2014, p279). Content analysis can also be qualitative, but its objective is more exploratory and does not include statistics (Vitouladiti 2014; Stepchenkova, Kirilenko, and Morrison 2009).

Based on Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p.1285), content analysis ideally follows a seven-step process, the aim of which consists in “formulating the research questions to be answered, select the sample to be analysed, defining the categories to be applied, outlining the coding process and the coder training, implement the coding process, determining trustworthiness, and analysing the results of the coding process”. In regards to the categories' definition, the authors stated that three different approaches can be applied: categories can be derived either directly from the data, or from previous research on the same research topic and then applied to the current study (categories can also be added), or from the counting of attributes, leading to comparisons (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). The research in this paper builds its investigation on the attribute categories developed in previous research, and they constitute the basis for coding the data. This process is arguably more structured than the two other techniques (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).

Data Collection and Selected Sample

To conduct the content analysis, images of Switzerland were downloaded from the Facebook page of Switzerland Tourism (www.facebook.com/MySwitzerland). Overall, the DMO posted more than 13,600 images on its Facebook page between 2013 and the end of 2015, in different albums. However, due to the high volume of data the research decided to focus on the most recent of these images. Over the past year, 551 images were uploaded between 01 January and 31 December 2015. The data were collected over one day and all the images were downloaded twice. They were coded 0001 to 0551. This double process ensured that no image was omitted. After saving them in chronological order, the images were analysed sequentially to identify whether each one was a DMO or a user-generated ‘fan’ image, and to note the corresponding location where the image was captured. That information was subsequently inputted into an Excel spreadsheet. The images that did not have a location written in their description were excluded from the sample, as well as other images that were considered as irrelevant (for instance, the image of the Instagram logo that encourage people to follow the DMO on the eponymous social network), or because they were posted twice on different days. The final number of images in the sample was 384: 245 images uploaded by the DMO and 139 images pictured by ‘fans’, but uploaded by the DMO with the hashtag #fanphoto or #SwissSelfie in their description.

Category Development and Data Coding

Before the coding of the data, a development of categories is required. As Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p1285) state, categories are “patterns or themes that are directly expressed in the text or are derived from them through analysis”. This definition is also applicable for images. As mentioned earlier, the categories used for this research are derived from existing literature. The research mainly follows the study conducted by Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013). Based on the research of Echtner and Ritchie (1993) and Albers and James (1988), Stepchenkova and Zhan highlighted 20 categories that represent tourism images of Peru (Stepchenkova and Zhan 2013). Those categories were used by the researchers as a basis for this investigation and include, for example: “Nature & Landscape”, “Wildlife”, “Leisure activities” and “Country landscape”. Three new categories were added by the principal researcher after seeing all the images once: “Swiss flag”, “Sport activities” and “Wellness”. In addition, the category “Domesticated animals” was renamed “Animals” to include all the animals that were observed in the sample images. Finally, as Switzerland has virtually no archaeological sites, this category was removed. The final list is composed of 22 categories of attributes.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The aim of this analysis is to determine which categories of attributes are found in the DMO and ‘fan’ images uploaded by Switzerland Tourism on its Facebook page to brand Switzerland as a tourism destination. The categories of attributes are based on a study undertaken by Stepchenkova and Zhan (2013). However, the list used for this research was modified, with three categories added, one removed and one renamed. As mentioned in the methodology, a total of 200 images were content-analysed by two researchers.

Table 2 and bar chart (Figure 14) below summarize the share, expressed as a percentage, represented by each category of attributes that were identified in the sample, with DMO and ‘fan’ images undifferentiated. The categories are ordered by their degree of frequency in the images sample.

Share (in %) represented by each category of attributes in the images sample (in share order)

Categories	DMO images (in %)	Fan images (in %)	Total (in %)
Nature & Landscape	40	80	60
Architecture/Buildings	61	27	44
People	43	26	34,5
Outdoor/Adventure	19	38	28,5
Country landscape	13	42	27,5
Urban landscape	24	23	23,5
Tourism facilities	29	13	21
Wild life	8	28	18
Transport/Infrastructure	5	18	11,5
Festivals & Rituals	10	11	10,5
Wellness	20	1	10,5
Plants	10	9	9,5
Way of life	16	0	8
Leisure activities	9	5	7
Sport activities	4	10	7
Tour	3	8	5,5
Swiss flag	4	4	4
Animals	3	4	3,5
Food	6	0	3
Art object	3	2	2,5
Other	0	5	2,5
Traditional clothing	3	2	2,5

Table 2: Share (in %) represented by each category of attributes in the images sample (in share order)

As shown in the previous table and chart, the first category, Nature & Landscape, has the biggest share of the images sample. 120 images were classified under this category, representing a 60% share of the images. However, there is an important discrepancy between the two samples under analysis, as this category is represented in 80% of ‘fan’ images in comparison to only 40% of DMO images. Architecture/Buildings is the second largest category in the sample with a 44% share of the total images surveyed. However, only 27 user-generated ‘fan’ images were classified in that category compared to 61 DMO images. Thirdly, People were identified in 69 images out of 200 (34.5% of the sample). This category includes local people, tourists, adventurers, skiers who were visible in the images and images containing Sebi and Paul - two iconic Swiss characters representing Switzerland in the promotional material of Switzerland Tourism. More human faces were observed in DMO images; 43%, as opposed to 26% of ‘fan’ images.

In the overall sample of 200 images, 22 cantons are represented. Each canton had a share of between 1% and 18.17% of all images, and the represented cantons are shown on average 9.1 times in the sample (4.55%). Bern is ranked first, being the most represented canton in the sample, followed by Graubünden and Valais.

In the DMO sample, the images were distributed between 19 cantons of Switzerland. The representation of each canton varied between 1.5% to 19% of all photos, with an average of 5.26%. Graubünden and Bern were the most represented cantons in the DMO sample, with 19% and 15.50% respectively, followed by Ticino, Zürich, Vaud and Valais.