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**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT  
USING FACEBOOK AMONG HOTEL OPERATORS IN  
MALAYSIA**



**UUM**

Universiti Utara Malaysia

**NAWAR ABBOOD FADHIL**

**MASTER OF SCIENCE (INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY)**

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## ABSTRACT

The use of social media has changed the way communication and interaction with each other and also with business companies such as how hotel industries take place. Currently, social media is the main tool in hotel industry in facilitating the marketing besides being used in engaging with customers. Indeed, recent studies had discovered that customers make decision largely based on the influence of user-generated content and word of mouth. However, there are limited studies which examined the use of Facebook as a tool to engage with customers especially in Malaysia. Thus, this study aims at exploring the use of social media among Malaysian hotels and how these hotels engage with customers through Facebook. Besides, this study also attempts to identify the metrics used by Malaysian hotels to measure the engagement of their customers. Data were collected through interview and content analysis over the Facebook page of selected hotels. The results had indicated that hotels use Facebook as an important communication tool to engage with their customers in various ways. Besides the benefits, this study also discovered some difficulties faced by the hotels when they communicate socially with their customers. On top of that, this study determined that hotels measure their engagement with customers through Facebook in two ways: (i) using software; and (ii) monitoring the page from inside. The results also had shown that some of the hotels are confused about the way to measure the engagement, in which they only focus on certain metrics while others are neglected. In a nutshell, Facebook pages of Malaysian hotels have a relatively weak engagement with customers especially in voice opinion and advocacy. In contrast, attitude expression has a moderate level.

**Keywords:** Social media, Facebook, benchmark, Malaysia, hotels.

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## ABSTRAK

Penggunaan media sosial telah mengubah corak komunikasi dan interaksi di kalangan pengguna dan entiti perniagaan seperti industri perhotelan. Pada masa ini, media sosial merupakan alatan pemasaran dan perhubungan utama dalam industri perhotelan. Malahan, penemuan terkini menunjukkan tetamu hotel membuat keputusan berdasar kepada pengaruh kandungan hasil pengguna dan komunikasi lisan. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian mengenai penggunaan Facebook sebagai alatan perhubungan dengan tetamu terutama di Malaysia masih terlalu kurang. Maka, kajian ini menetapkan matlamat untuk mengkaji penggunaan media sosial di kalangan hotel di Malaysia dan bagaimana hotel-hotel di Malaysia berhubung dengan tetamu mereka melalui Facebook. Di samping itu, kajian ini berhasrat untuk mengenal pasti metrik yang digunakan oleh hotel-hotel di Malaysia bagi mengukur hubungan mereka dengan tetamu. Data dikumpul melalui temuduga dan analisis kandungan terhadap laman Facebook hotel terpilih. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa hotel menggunakan Facebook sebagai alatan komunikasi penting untuk berhubung dengan tetamu mereka melalui pelbagai cara. Selain dari faedah, kajian ini juga menemui beberapa kelemahan ketika berkomunikasi dengan tetamu. Selain itu, kajian ini mendapati bahawa hotel mengukur hubungan mereka dengan tetamu melalui Facebook dengan dua cara: (i) melalui penggunaan perisian; dan (ii) pemantauan dalaman. Dapatan juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hotel yang keliru mengenai cara mengukur hubungan mereka dengan tetamu, mengakibatkan mereka mengambil kira metrik tertentu dan mengabaikan yang lain. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan laman Facebook di hotel-hotel di Malaysia mempunyai hubungan yang lemah dengan tetamu terutama dari segi aspek pendapat dan sokongan lisan. Sebaliknya, penterjemahan sikap mempunyai hubungan yang lebih baik.

**Keywords:** Media sosial, Facebook, penanda aras, Malaysia, hotel.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ICT:	Information Communication Technology
SNS:	Social Network Site
MAH:	Malaysian Association of Hotel
SMM:	Social Media Marketing
UGC:	User Generate Content
WOM:	Word of Mouth



# CHAPTER ONE

## OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to address the context of this study. It begins with the background of the study, deliberating the problem statement and motivation, outlining the research questions, stating the research objectives, and underlining the scope of the study. It also expresses the summarize of the chapter.

### 1.2 Background

The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in tourism industry plays a vital role as an effective marketing tool. Tourism is one of the major industries that have been benefiting from ICT. Previous studies (Buhalis, 2003; Frew, 2000; Liburd, 2005) discovered that ICT has been regarded as a tactical tool in helping and facilitating tourism development. Recently, Leue, Jung, and Knowles (2013) found that ICT with internet access is used in communication and sales in most sectors, including those related to tourism. In fact, Law, Leung, and Buhalis (2009) earlier discovered that ICT has become an important and crucial tool for competitive processes in the tourism industry and hotel operators, in addition to managing the marketing and distribution for firms universally. This means the process of managing, developing, and marketing tourism destinations and products has been diversified (DANTE, 2014). It is possible because the Internet is a huge repository of information (Khatri & Mittal, 2015) that offers a global reach, is easily accessible, is cost-effective and is convenient.

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