



The influence of Social Media on Revenue Management in Hotels

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in

Tourism and Hospitality Management

Submitted to Dr. Florian Aubke

Anna Beneder

1211080

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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Abstract

The importance of social media is clearly identified for various forms of businesses. Intangibility and high involvement of customers in the hospitality industry are crucial factors of adaptation. The new way of communication supports the hotels in identifying the customer's needs and wants in order to achieve high guest satisfaction. This new open data can not only be used for marketing purposes but also to support strategic decisions in the area of revenue management. In order to identify opportunities of the new media and also challenges, interviews with revenue managers of hotels in Vienna were conducted. The previous studies and the qualitative research will help us to understand possible ways of integrating social media into strategic planning.

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1 Introduction

Facebook, Twitter & co. are a fix part of our everyday life. Everybody with an internet connection is able to participate in various ways. This part of the online world also influences the hospitality industry and their guests. A connection to Revenue Management (hereafter referred to as RM) cannot be drawn easily and is looking for investigation.

The different forms of Social Media (hereafter referred to as SM) platforms can be grouped by content or activities, such as social news (e.g. Digg, Sphinn, Newsvine), social sharing (e.g. Flickr, YouTube), social networks (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter), social bookmarking (e.g. Pinterest, Delicious), social review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Yelp), social purchase/review sites (e.g. Amazon, Booking) and blogs (Jones, 2009; Noone, McGuire & Rohlf, 2011). Due to the technological development we do recognize a shift to online communication also described as electronic word of mouth (hereafter referred to as eWOM) (Nieto, Hernández-Maesro, Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). Moreover, it is proven that we trust the recommendations of friends and family the most and, with eWOM, this scope gets broader as it is, thus, possible to read the opinion of other unknown consumers (Lee and Youn, 2009; Nieto, Nernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014).

The new way of communication is important for the hotel product as it is intangible in nature. People have to rely on the information they get via various offline and online sources (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Hotels can use SM as a marketing tool which has lower costs than traditional media. Furthermore, this new two-way communication makes it possible to build up brand awareness and loyalty and to learn about the guests' needs and wants (Jones, 2009). Complaining or commenting on their experiences as well as sharing them via SM platforms is more convenient for customers. More guest feedback can help to improve and to increase customer satisfaction. TripAdvisor is one of the most popular platforms when it comes to reviews on travelling (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Comparing various comments supports the decision making process in a more holistic way rather than only comparing prices. People try to find the best value for their money (Schegg et al, 2008).

The reviews not only influence consumers' perception but also the performance of the lodging industry. The study of Anderson (2012) showed the increasing importance of TripAdvisor in the pre-booking phase. Furthermore, he identified the connection between a rise on a review scale and, therefore, the possible rise in price. Other studies pointed out the importance of content and quantity of reviews (Blal and Sturman, 2014; Nieto, Nernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014).

The evolvement of the internet also provides other features, such as a fast and efficient way of sharing price and availability of hotel rooms (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011). The channels used are not only direct but they also use partners for example various Online Travel Agencies (hereafter referred to as OTAs), which serve as a transparent comparison tool for both consumers and hoteliers. The new channels challenge the management with the implementation of a RM strategy and the right choice of distribution channels as they support the development of the brand, add value and build customer loyalty (O'Conner and Few, 2002; Sigala and Buhalis, 2002). In simple words a RM strategy is "selling the right capacity to the right customers at the right price" (Smith, Leimkuhler and Darrow, 1992). In order to come up with a plan various questions need to be answered and the various aspects looked into as a lot of tasks are involved (Mahmoud, 2015). Knowing what the customer thinks about the hotel can support the revenue manager's decisions and shows the social reputation of the property (Leposa, 2014). To organize this new data it is important to introduce an analytical tool which supports the tracking of booking behaviour (Joseph, Aubke and Stierand, 2014).

A previous study by Hubbs (2013) showed different usages of SM platforms and suggestions of how to increase market share and revenue.

1.1 Research Question and Study Approach

New challenges for the job of a revenue manager occur daily. New booking behaviour triggered by SM and online booking platforms as well as a growing competition not only of hotel operators but also new trends demand new skills of revenue managers. Besides the knowledge of trends and customer needs an understanding of digital and SM, IT functionality, marketing and sale strategies are important requirements (Earls, 2014).

The framework for evaluating SM related RM opportunities introduced by Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) serves as a base for various interview questions asked to the five revenue managers of five-star hotels in Vienna. Two dimensions, time orientation and information flow categorize the opportunities in four different areas of strategy. Different suggestions and also examples of possible implementations are given, which are presented to the interviewees. It will be identified how feasible some of the ideas are, if some approaches are integrated in everyday RM or if no importance of SM is seen for RM in order to answer the main research question: *Does Social Media have an influence on Revenue Management?*

Personal interviews were conducted as the type of research in order to gain a better understanding of the thoughts, issues and opportunities of revenue managers who are doing this job every day and can therefore be seen as experts on this topic.

1.2 The Aim of the Study

The aim of this paper is to show what influence SM has on hospitality, in particular, on the work of a revenue manager. Furthermore, it will analyze the evolution of RM and the importance of integrating SM in decision making. We will gain insight on ways and methods to embed the new ways of communication into strategic planning. Interviews with Revenue Managers of luxury hotels in Vienna are going to help us understand the challenges this job is facing. It will help us understand how they adopted their techniques and if SM is seen as an advantage. Lastly, we will have a look onto future predictions regarding the topic.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Social Media

SM as compared to traditional media (for example newspaper, TV) allows the consumer to participate in the development of the contact (Noone, McGuire & Rohlfs, 2011). The communication changed from a one-way broadcast to a two-way conversation (Jones, 2009). This new way of exchange diversified the way we live and do things (Yeoman, 2011). As one part of online media it is a service where people talk, participate, network and bookmark. Most platforms encourage

interested people to participate in discussion, give feedback, do voting, write comments and share information with others (Jones, 2009). SM sites come in different forms. For an easier understanding Jones (2009) grouped the different platforms according to their features as follows:

- Social news: The possibility to read news and then vote and/or comment on the articles. Examples: Digg, Sphinn, Newsvine, BallHype
- Social sharing: Platforms to create, upload and share videos or photos with others. Examples: Flickr, Snapfish, YouTube, Jumpcut
- Social networks: These sites allow you to find other people and link with them. Once you are connected you can keep up to date with that person's profile, posts, etc. Many people use these platforms to connect with friends they lost contact with. These portals connect the world. Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter
- Social bookmarking: Assist to find and bookmark sites and information of interest. The bookmarks are saved and can be accessed from anywhere and also shared with others. Examples: Pinterest, Delicious, Faves, BlogMarks

Three other types not mentioned in the article are:

- Social review sites: Platforms where the focus lies on reviews, comments and ratings in regard to a certain topic. TripAdvisor has its focus on travel. Yelp is about shops, restaurants, and other facilities (Noone, McGuire & Rohlf, 2011).
- Social purchase/review sites: Amazon is a great example of that. People often rely on the comments and rates of previous purchasers. The travel industry offers booking.com and trivago (Noone, McGuire & Rohlf, 2011).
- Blogs: You can either write a blog yourself or you follow and read blogs. People write about things they are interested in or want to document. For example there are a lot of travel blogs, cooking blogs, styling blogs, etc.

2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth

The enhancement of technology developed a new way of communication and the word of mouth (hereafter referred to as WOM) became an eWOM (Nieto,

Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). Bughin (2010) states that WOM has the biggest influence on 20 to 50 percent of all our purchasing decisions. It is more trustworthy to get recommendations from friends and family than of marketers or advertising (Lee and Youn, 2009). SM is the digital version of WOM and illustrates the materialization, storage and retrieval of content online. This new way of communicating via SM platforms, product review sites or blogs has more influence than traditional WOM as more people can be reached in less time. With eWOM recommendations of strangers are also readable, which gives a broader scope of information (Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). Researchers found out that according to industry research reports friends and family are the most trustworthy source and second rank is assigned to online reviews (Blal and Sturman 2014).

Consequently, the Web 2.0 transforms the guest. First being only a passive consumer, he/she changed to an active prosumer (producer and consumer) of travel experiences (Christou, 2010).

SM is dependent on users providing content. Therefore it is essential to determine what their motives are. The social exchange theory explains that people engage in communication they find rewarding. This shows that all social behaviour is based on an individual's cost-benefit analysis of engaging in a social exchange. However, the reward is mostly social, such as opportunity, prestige, conformity, or acceptance (Emerson, 1976).

2.3 Hospitality and Social Media

The hotel is a big part of the travel experience although some people are only there for a good night's rest. The hotel is a socially important component. For travellers it is much more interesting to share information about hotels via different networks with their friends than about other components of the holiday (Hubbs, 2013).

For business the new media is not only a challenge but also a great opportunity (Jones, 2009). The intangibility and the experiential nature of tourism products make it crucial to the hospitality and tourism business. Visitors have to rely on the information they receive either online or offline and they analyze the product

alternatives (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Almost everyone with an internet connection is able to contribute. The different communication tools have led to an explosion of social media content. Surrounded by the volume of SM, the hospitality industry is looking for a way to manage the media to their advantage.

The user-generated content and social intelligence do not only have a great impact on the travellers' behaviour but are also useful to improve the effectiveness of business operations (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). It is a great tool to build up brand awareness and a good reputation. Furthermore, SM gets you closer to the customer through real time communication. It is a new way to learn about the customers' needs and wants. Also, the cost compared to traditional media is much lower (Jones, 2009). The various possibilities of SM are made use of by the hospitality industry as well. It is important to differentiate hotel sales from other industries in the extent of the involvement the customer has (Blal and Sturman, 2014). Obviously everyone wants to increase their bookings but with SM you have channels for various uses. Examples of the branding mentioned above would be posting advice, reviews, upcoming events, thus becoming an important information source. SM can also be used as a platform for direct sales where exclusive offers are promoted (Evision Worldwide LLC, 2012).

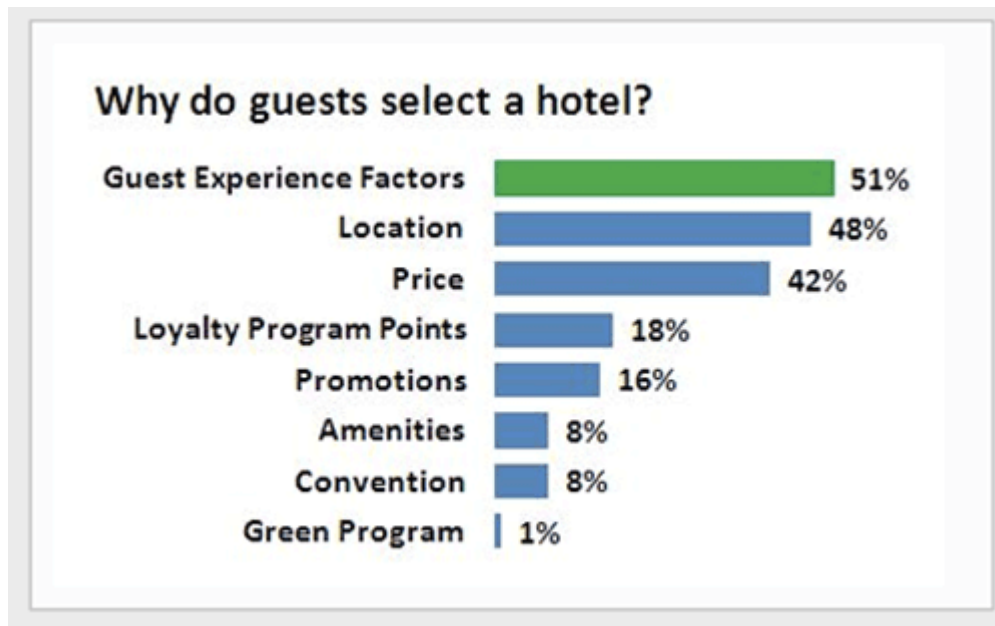
Customer satisfaction is very important in service industry and therefore essential for hospitality (Evision Worldwide LLC, 2012). Hotels use Facebook and the like platforms to communicate with the consumer directly and to improve the understanding of their needs (Sigala, 2007). Using SM, people are more willing to comment, complain and share their experience. For hotels this is an opportunity to increase customer satisfaction. The perception of psychological ownership and control among their customers is achieved via loyalty and guest feedback, service recovery programs should help to keep negative evaluations internal and positive feedback external (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Customer reviews will show you improvements and the possibility to react to positive feedback and also complaints.

Thus, a great customer service is achieved and guest loyalty will be established (Evision Worldwide LLC, 2012). All in all, we see that SM has an influence on a guest's booking behaviour (Anderson, 2012).

Some hotel chains provide their own guest review sites but in general user-generated review websites (TripAdvisor) are dominating eWOM. Tripadvisor for example increased their 40 million reviews attracting over 50 million users each month in 2010 (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012) to 200 million reviews attracting over 315 million users in 2014 (TripAdvisor, 2015). In 2008, approximately 75 percent took online reviews into account when planning their trips (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). The World Travel Market Report of 2010 showed that 35 percent of users change their choice of hotels after reading online reviews (Blal and Sturman, 2014). Most reviews approach the “value for money” issue. This shows a more holistic comparison rather than a mere price comparison between different booking sites. Nowadays more travellers prefer finding and planning a unique trip to a cheap trip (Schegg et al, 2008). Some hotels clearly show services included or not included in the price you pay. Others make it difficult or even impossible to find that out in advance of the stay. The online reviews tend to partly fill this gap and support an overall value comparison rather than only comparing online rates (Conrady, 2007).

Anderson (2012) showed with his research that SM has an impact on the lodging performance. With the support of Cornell’s Center for Hospitality Research, data from three research partners (ReviewPro, STR, and Travelocity) and two other data providers (comScore and TripAdvisor) were combined to determine Return on Investment (ROI) for SM efforts. Firstly, it was identified that the percentage of consumers using TripAdvisor as a consulting tool has increased, as well as the number of reviews people read prior to making a hotel booking. Previous a study was conducted by Market Metrix (2010) to see which factors are important to guest in order to select a hotel (see figure 1). 51 percent of survey respondents integrate the guest experience factors into their hotel selection decision (Anderson, 2012).

Figure 1: Factors in hotel selection (Market Metrix, 2010)



Furthermore, data from purchased and non-purchased hotels were analyzed, which illustrates a hotel's opportunity to increase the price. If a hotel manages to increase their review scores by one point on a scale, the prices can be increased by 11.2 percent with occupancy staying the same. Lastly, Anderson (2012) showed the positive relation between user reviews and hotel performance. Blal and Sturman (2014) state that there is a connection between a firm's sales performance and the influence of eWOM on customers' behaviour which can indicate a usage to forecast sales also If online reputation improves, pricing power and occupancy increases for a hotel. The model applied by Anderson (2012) estimates that a 1 percent increase in Global Review Index (hereafter referred to as GRI) can increase Average Daily Rate (hereafter referred to as ADR) by 0.89 percent. Also, a 0.54 percent increase in occupancy can be achieved. Looking at these effects in combination, the increase in GRI leads up to a 1.42 percent increase in Revenue per Available Room (hereafter referred to as RevPAR).

Further studies exist which show the volume of online reviews as the primary influence on sales (Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). In more detail, eWOM can be seen as a construct of two components, the *valence* (customer rating level) and the *volume* (the quantity of discussion) (Blal and Sturman 2014). The volume of online reviews does not differentiate between negative and positive

feedback. Therefore it appears that according to the positive relationship between the number of reviews and the number of bookings, the content is not primary. Reviews in general increase customer awareness to hotels offerings (Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). The research on data from 319 hotels in the London market by Blal and Sturman (2014) shows a non-significant result in the relationship between volume and RevPAR for all hotels. Furthermore, volume is negatively related to the hotel segment, which shows that eWOM volume on sales performance is lower for high-end hotels.

Blal and Sturman (2014) found out that there is a strong correlation between valence and RevPAR. In contrast to volume the effect of valence is the largest in luxury hotels.

Similar results were achieved by the research of Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego (2014) which states that the price level is another influence factor to the quantity of online reviews. If the price is high for a good or a service, customers are highly involved in the purchasing decision. Another reason for high involvement is the people's wish to show their status (Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego 2014). This can be explained by the social exchange theory mentioned above as people are seeking social reward such as prestige (Emerson, 1976).

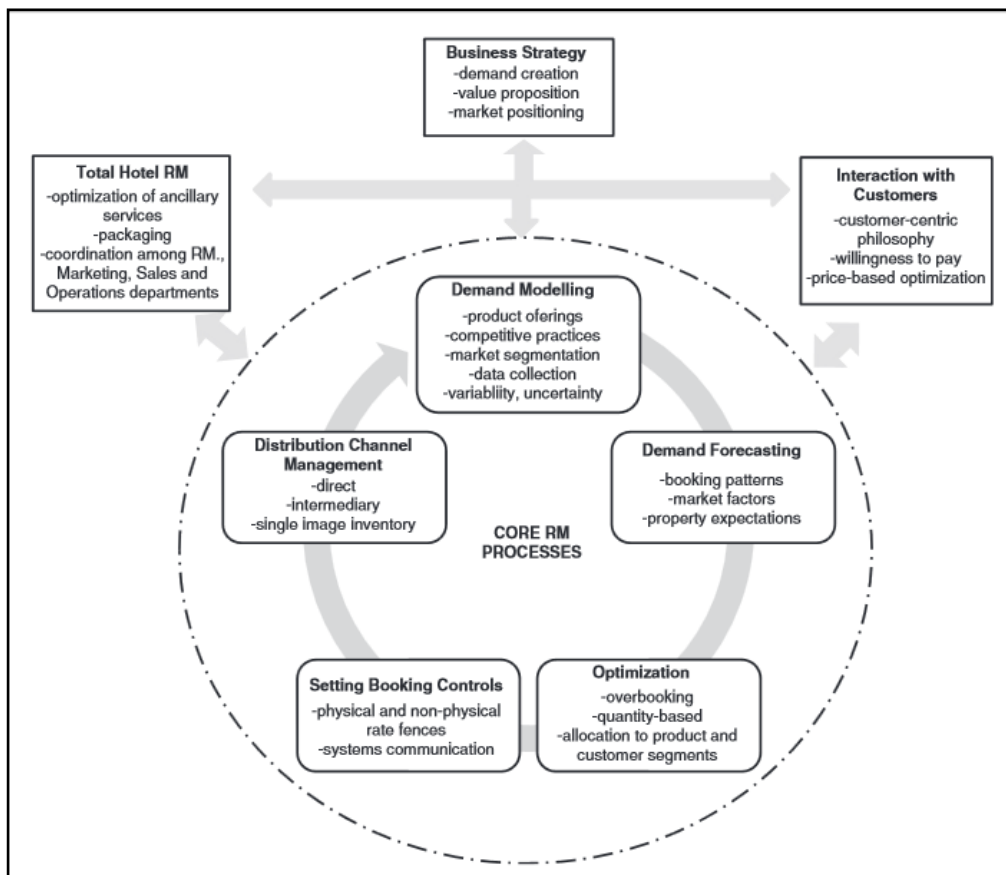
2.4 Revenue Management

RM had its start in the airline industry. In 1972, Ken Littlewood published a seminar paper about his work on using mathematical models in the airline industry. With methods of forecasting and revenue control, he created a concept of maximizing the revenue received on a particular flight without maximizing the number of passengers (Yeoman, 2011). For other businesses who share characteristics such as perishable inventory, restricted capacity, volatile demand, micro segmented markets, availability of advanced reservation, and low variable to fixed cost ratio RM can have a significant contribution (Wirtz, et al., 2003). The start of RM in the hotel industry practiced "selling the right capacity to the right customers at the right prices" (Smith, Leimkuhler and Darrow, 1992, s.p.). In the words of Mahmoud (2015): "Revenue Management represents the technique that helps hoteliers to achieve highest profits by correctly identifying the customer groups that the hotel

has to serve (market segments), establishing the right (quantity of) products and services as well as setting up the optimal prices to be offered to these customers.”

RM transformation is shown in a graphical overview below. It identifies the core RM processes with the evolved RM responsibilities (see figure 2) (Noone, McGuire & Rohlfs, 2011).

Figure 2: Evolving scope of RM activities (Noone, McGuire & Rohlfs, 2011)



From a tactical to a strategic role, RM got integrated into all aspects within the organization (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011). It evolved from maximizing ADR to maximizing revenue, not only in rooms profit but on the total property revenue (Anderson and Xi, 2010). Broadening the scope of RM includes managing the entire revenue stream where some new applications emerged (for example function space RM, restaurant RM, spa RM). Furthermore, the focus on inventory optimization developed to price optimization. Lastly, the criticized orientation of short-term maximization shifted to a customer-centric orientation (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011). According to Anderson and Xi (2010) “one can now think of RM as managing

customer behaviour at the individual level via price and availability of constrained resources to maximize profits.”

2.5 Importance of feedback

A hotel operates to achieve the following main goals: generate more revenue, achieve high guest satisfaction and high rank compared to competitors. The implementations of RM concepts help to achieve these goals with various tools (Mahmoud, 2015).

Orkin (1988) describes many tools which are used in RM applications. Particularly, properties need to have a focus on four main areas: forecasting, systems and procedures, strategy and tactical plans and feedback systems. Starting with forecasts of future demand, supported by automated systems for rate control, a tactical plan is needed for employees to implement the recommendations. In order to achieve high effectiveness a feedback loop is important to show managers and employees the impact of their decisions (Orkin, 1988). This is also supported by Tom Magnuson, CEO of hotel services organization Magnus Worldwide. In his interview with Hotel Management (Leposa, 2014) he said: : “We try to find what is the best data that’s going to give us a sound foundation for a good pricing strategy, and utilizing review data is going to be one of the key anchors of our RM strategy going forward.”

2.6 Price transparency

Through the internet, a rapid and efficient way of communicating price and availability of hotel rooms is used by hotel operators. Either their own channel is used or one of the by now unlimited number of distribution partners (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011). The newly gained transparency forces RM to a different pricing approach (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011). SM changed the classical way of business to customer (B2C) communication to an interactive customer to customer (C2C) opportunity. Tourists get involved in the search for tourism services as they have a highly perceived risk and this is a way of reducing uncertainty (Sirakaya and Woodside, 2005). The customer can easily obtain and compare information and rates (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011). With the growth of OTAs (e.g. Expedia) a more transparent pricing in hotels evolved. According to Pellinen (2003) pricing is a central management task for service companies. Pricing decisions

should take a more holistic approach, in which not only cost and competitive issues are considered, but also other company and environmentally related characteristics such as customers (Avlonitis and Inounas, 2006). It is a critical task in the hospitality industry to develop a pricing strategy as it is associated with the hotel image, profitability and yield management, which are all significant issues. There are three different techniques of hotel pricing: cost-based pricing, competition-driven pricing and customer-driven pricing. Proactively changing the customers' willingness to pay by knowing my guest is another much more profitable and also a more difficult technique to apply, titled as value based pricing (Nagle and Holden, 1995).

With the internet a new distribution channel for hotels was raised along with a new way to price their products. The new electronic distribution channels challenge the revenue managers with opportunities and problems (Choi and Kimes, 2002). OTAs are often able to offer a lower price compared to the hotel's own website. By various distribution channels also online it becomes even more difficult to implement a RM strategy (O'Conner and Frew, 2002). Choosing a good portfolio of distribution channels will add value, develop the brand and build customer loyalty (Sigala and Buhalis, 2002).

Along with the electronic market price transparency increased, which results in a lower product price (Buhalis and Zoge, 2007). One result of this transparency is the best available rate (hereafter referred to as BAR). Guests do not pay an average rate for their stay but actually have a BAR rate for each day (Anderson, 2010).

SM provides a worldwide possibility to share opinion about hotel services, prices, satisfaction levels and perceived value. This type of reviews increased the overall transparency levels (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). Furthermore, the increase of distribution channels has increased the customer exposure to RM (Noone and Mattila, 2009).

2.7 The Revenue Manager

The job of a revenue manager can be described as to "implement RM strategies and processes in order to optimize and maximize its revenues" (Mahmoud, 2015). As we look back it is recognized that earlier the position of a revenue manager was created

out of rooms division functions, usually the reservations department (Joseph, Aubke and Stierand, 2014).

The tasks of analyzing data, identifying trends and making decision about rates changed to a complex process. Nowadays it involves the OTAs, mobile marketing, hyper-interactive consumers and direct competitors, who consistently undercut prices (Mahmoud, 2015). To understand and benefit from the latest developments in the revenue management systems as well as the advanced electronic distribution systems, good technical skills are needed (Law et al, 2013).

In order to come up with a strategy some questions need to be looked into. From which market segments (i.e. packages, corporate, retails, groups or transient) do the reservations come from? Which strategy worked well? This is a base to decide which segments need to be boosted or reduced. Each segment is defined by the unique customer needs and characteristics. Using this as a base a value proposition and a product-price positioning strategy can be created for each segment (Mahmoud, 2015). Furthermore, revenue managers analyze which channels the reservations are coming from. Nowadays OTAs are an important part of the hotel distribution business. Another vital part of the job is to make and look into the market share analysis report, which provides an understanding of the hotel performance compared to competitors. The tasks of a revenue manager are not only related to revenue issues but also extend to sales and marketing (Mahmoud, 2015). It might be that the lines between RM and marketing are quite blurring especially in regards to managing the customer experience which is part of the overall revenue strategy (Holt, 2013).

Mahmoud (2015) puts it that way: “Today’s revenue manager can play a larger role in the overall success of the hotel than ever before.”

2.8 Social Media in Revenue Management

Magnuson talks with Leposa (2014) about RM as “no certifiable science and largely guided by a collection of personalized ad hoc decision point”. SM can therefore definitely be seen as a helpful tool and base for revenue managers’ judgements and decisions. “Once we have information on what the customer thinks of us, then we

act on that; this will guide our pricing,” Magnuson said. All in all it is important to know what guests think about the hotel and be aware of the social reputation as this is crucial to the guest’s willingness to book (Leposa, 2014).

The dependency on external data sources increased as capacity management got shifted to price optimization. Supported by technology, revenue managers are now able to use data from multiple sources. Those external data sources include SM sites and review sites with rankings and user generated content (Anderson, 2012). Furthermore, available benchmarking figures like the STAR report from Smith Travel Research indicating the past performance in comparison to the competitive set of a hotel is an example for an external data source (Enz, Canina and Noone, 2012). With this new input available the RM decision making process can be enhanced (Noone, McGuire & Rohlfs, 2011). Vinod (2011) holds that the new meta search engines (e.g. Trivago) are not only an advancement in distribution and channel management with a high transparency for customers but also a competitive online battle. With more data available analytical approaches are an important requirement for revenue managers nowadays (Baker, 2013). These analytical technologies will support the tracking of booking behaviour and help to apply a more strict segmentation by combing through the in-house and externally generated data (Joseph, Aubke and Stierand, 2014).

The impact of user-generated content such as reviews on rates and revenues was mentioned in various studies (Hubbs, 2013). Hubbs (2013) states an influence of SM during and after a trip but also shows its future impact on pre-departure behaviour which will affect RM.

Hubbs (2013) provides examples which show the advantages of different SM channels. By the following marketing activities which are directly tied to RM a growth in market share and revenue can be achieved:

- “Tweeting value-adds that will drive travelers to your hotel.
- Utilizing Pinterest to highlight hero shots of the hotel as well as tie into promotional rate periods.
- Activating special offers through TripAdvisor and monitoring your competitors’ willingness to do the same.

- Cultivating Facebook followers to find your true promoters.”

Hubbs (2013) also addresses the question of what a hotel or in particular a revenue team can do in terms of SM usage. As Web 2.0 is all about conversations, building networks and sharing ideas he suggests the following:

- “Involve the team. Set egos and departments aside and have open conversations about what you see on social media and how that affects your revenue strategy. Uncover the opportunities by engaging in dialogue.
- Monitor social media all the time. There are several services available that help hotels monitor the dialogue and provide analytics behind the conversation. Some hotels have these tools provided to them by the brands (and many do not use them), while others shop around for the best in class provider out there. Regardless, get help so you can synthesize the conversations.
- Use the data. Use trend and competitive analyses to identify quantitative options. Read reviews and use semantic analysis tools to look at qualitative information. Include this detail in your strategy discussions so you can make decisions and act.
- Test, measure, test and test again. Know what your goals are, test, measure and test, test, test. See what strategies resonate with your network, see what helps you expand your network and tie those activities to your revenue-management strategies.”

Hubbs (2013) provides a nice summary: “SM is a constantly evolving platform to engage with travellers. Hotels that tie that engagement to RM strategies and find ways to incorporate this intelligence into their day-to-day revenue plans will lead their competitive sets and ultimately find themselves ahead on the bottom line.”

2.9 Framework for evaluating Social Media related Revenue Management Opportunities

SM has the ability to provide real-time, two-way communication which is seen as an opportunity to the hotel operators. Additionally, it allows potential for building awareness, reputation and business (Lanz, Fischhof & Lee, 2010). All these

opportunities are documented and discussed and a framework for evaluating the potential of SM for RM was created by Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) (see table 1).

Table 1: Framework for evaluating SM-related RM opportunities (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011)

<i>Information flow</i>	<i>Time orientation</i>	
	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Long term</i>
<i>Inbound</i>	<i>Inform promotional and pricing decisions</i>	<i>Inform strategy development</i>
Customer-generated content	1. Configuration and pricing of promotions and packages	1. Pricing 2. Customer relationship development 3. Distribution channel management
<i>Outbound</i>	<i>Drive demand creation and build brand awareness</i>	<i>Drive customer development and retention</i>
Firm-generated content	1. Execution of push strategies: rooms and ancillary revenue streams	1. Development of micro-sites targeted at specific customer groups 2. Engagement in social blogging

The first dimension of the framework is the information flow and the second is the time orientation. The information flow is categorized into inbound and outbound, inbound referring to customer-generated content (e.g. reviews, ratings, photos, comments) and outbound to the content communicated by the company (e.g. promotions, press releases, response to reviews) (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011).

The inbound, short term content can be used to develop targeted push strategies. Various reviews of customers are a great source to identify which ‘add-ons’ are liked and disliked. This customer generated content helps to enhance value proposition and create prices that customers are willing to pay. Actually this ‘listening’ to the customer is not new (e.g. guest comment cards) but SM offers more feedback from a larger, diverse group (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011).

Within inbound, long term content three areas of impact have been identified, the first being pricing. With SM data being public it enhances competitive price positioning. Having rate transparency results in a competition based on price. However, with the additional customer-generated data you gain insight into product attributes and price is no longer the only competition base (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011).

The second area identified is the customer relationship development. Collecting customer specific data can help with a better understanding of an organization's customer base. If this knowledge is combined with a loyalty program and/or a customer relationship management (CRM) system it will promote a customer centric approach of RM. Tailor made messages can help to build up long-term relationships with customers. In regard to the opportunity cost a revenue manager needs to take the value of customer into consideration. However, this no longer means who pays the higher rate. Additionally, the ancillary purchase, the long term value as well as their potential ability to influence followers through their social network connection need to be considered. In order to identify those influencers social network analysis can be used and 'influencer scores' can be assigned. As a result, RM will be able to compare the value of an active reviewer, a guest with expected ancillary purchases or a top tier loyalty program member and determine who is likely to bring more revenue (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011).

The third area deals with the concerns of distribution channel management and the question where to put resources and efforts as well as where to promote for maximum response. Using analytical tools on customer-generated content will show preferences and needs of customers. If the opportunity to understand the customer who is interacting is used it can help to identify the channels to focus on (Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs, 2011).

Outbound, short term content describes the shift in RM from demand control to demand creation. Social media channels can be used to execute push strategies to drive short-term capacity utilization. Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) provide the following example: "In 2009, the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid (NY) ran a '46'-themed promotion for fans and followers on Facebook and Twitter: a 46 min a day, 46-day promotion based on the elevations of the High Peaks. For example, a rate based on the 4867-foot elevation of Whiteface Mountain was US\$48.67, whereas a rate based on the 4361-foot elevation of Seward Mountain was \$43.61. Although these rates are inarguably low for a luxury resort, the promotion helped to fill rooms during a typically slow season and generated substantial publicity." SM channels are also an opportunity to decrease distribution costs. Providing a direct link from the SM platforms to the hotel's website or hotel booking engine will

encourage fans and followers to book direct. As already mentioned, presence is important. Torres (2010) shows that 84 percent of travelers use the internet as a planning resource, visiting an average of 22 sites before booking - and this was five years ago. Being present on more SM platforms can also help with search engine optimization because the more channels, the more linkages, the more likely you will be found. Additionally to building short term demand, SM can build brand awareness, increase the likelihood of subsequent brand choice and have positive impact on future revenue (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011).

In the last quarter, outbound, long term content the focus lies on customer development and retention. One key issue identified in RM is balancing short-term revenue maximization and long-term customer development. The movement mentioned before from demand control to demand creation drives RM to work together with marketing in order to build relationships with targeted customer groups. One example to connect with the customer, develop a brand voice and to build trust is social blogging, blogs about topics which are relevant to a guest of a hotel, such as things to do nearby. Trust is the key to loyalty.

3 Methodology

The qualitative research method used for this paper was interviews. This method was chosen to ensure a deeper understanding of RM and its challenges with a focus on SM. Conversation turned out to be a great form of research as it enabled the author to get to know the people, their work, and their experiences, knowledge and opinions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The term “interview” actually consists of two words. The “*inter view*” is described as an interaction between people, in this case the interviewer and the interviewee and their exchange of different views about a theme of interest (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

In a nut shell, “research interviews have the purpose of producing knowledge” (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

The form of interview conducted was a semi-structured interview as it was neither an everyday conversation nor done with a closed questionnaire (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

The interviews were recorded and transcribed into a written text, which served as the base for the subsequent analysis. The recording was important to avoid a loss of information and to ensure an accurate reflection of the interviews.

The possible interview partners were narrowed down only to revenue managers of luxury hotels in Vienna due to the fact that some lower categorized hotels might not have this job position. Also, all hotels belong to different international chains or groups. Furthermore, Vienna was chosen as the place to carry out the interviews, as it is the easiest to reach with the university being situated here. Vienna is a big European capital city and a lot of big international and national brands and numerous luxury hotels are situated in the centre. Therefore it offers a diverse pool of properties to contact.

All fourteen interview requests were sent to revenue managers. Unfortunately, four did not reply at all. Three revenue managers offered to answer the questions in a written format due to their lack of time for a personal interview. This offer was declined as it would not have fitted in with the overall approach. One revenue manager had just started his job a few weeks ago in the property and therefore did not feel up to answer all questions. All in all 71 percent of the interviewees contacted replied to the request, showed interest and supported the work.

The first interviewee (Manager A) works as a Cluster Revenue Manager for three 4- and 5-star hotels in Vienna belonging to a worldwide chain with a focus on business travellers and conferences. At the second interview the author had the opportunity to talk to the Director of Revenue Manager (Manager B) of a luxury 5-star property located on the Ringstraße as well as to the Marketing & E Commerce Manager (Manager C) of this hotel. Furthermore, the author interviewed the Director of Human Resources & Revenue Management (Manager D) of a 5-star design hotel. The fourth interview was with the Revenue Manager (Manager E) of another design hotel. Lastly, the author talked to somebody who used to work for various

luxury hotels as an Area Director of Revenue Manager but now runs her own revenue consulting company (Manager F).

4 Findings

Work experience as Revenue Manager and career path

With the first question the author wanted to find out since when the managers work in the field of RM. *Manager A* has worked in RM in Vienna for two and a half years and before he had a position in reservations combined with RM. Also *Manager E* was Reservations Manager where she also looked into Yield Management before she started as a Revenue Manager in 2007. For her it is a typical career path. Starting in the Reservations Department was also the way of *Manager D* to become a Revenue Manager in 2002. As Josephi, Aubke and Stierand (2014) stated, this is how the early position of a Revenue Manager was created, out of the Reservations Department. *Manager B* started to work as a Revenue Manager in a resort hotel and has now been in Vienna since 2013. The city is also the business area for *Manager F* as she started her own Revenue Consulting company after having worked in RM for hotels since 1996. She says that she was there from the beginning.

Changes in Revenue Management in the past years

As all the interviewees have a lot of expertise and experience, it was very interesting to analyze the, in their opinion, major changes of their job profiles within the last five years. All interview partners mentioned the OTAs accompanied by their advantages and disadvantages, described as 'the spirits that I've cited' by *Manager F* because they suddenly appeared and it was very easy for the hotels to sell the rooms, which resulted in savings in the field of Marketing and Sales as it seemed unnecessary now. However, now the OTAs are very powerful and the hotels depend on them plus have to pay high commission fees. The expansion of distribution channels to the online market make an implement of a RM strategy even more difficult (O'Conner and Frew, 2002). *Manager A* believes that you grow along with the development and challenges of the job. The manager describes the situation with the OTAs as follows: "It changes so quickly and there are so many things you need to consider. For example, booking.com is a nice tool but I need to pay a lot of

commission to them, therefore I rather have it through my own website than through them. Still I have no choice than use booking.com otherwise I would never have the audits that I now have. That why I now have to find a way how to minimize the commission costs and still make sure to achieve the same revenue results. The more channels you use and the more you are dependent on these channels and not on your own website, the less control you have yourself of the business.” This is exactly what Choi and Kimes (2002) described due to the challenges of revenue managers with the new electronic distribution channels. “Because everything is with booking.com and Expedia but nothing with my site anymore, they can say to increase the commission by 5 percent and I can only say yes in the end and that is not what we want,” concedes *Manager A*. Also *Manager B* described this dependency and the growing power. “The hotel website for example is not that important anymore. You have booking.com and Expedia they take sort of over”, says *Manager A*. Often the problem occurs that hotels do not know themselves on which platforms they are actually represented because not everything runs with direct contracts but it gets resold to a lot of other unknown websites. Trying to reduce this problem is not easy as it seems impossible to cover it all. There are always surprises waiting like websites and platforms you did not even know of existing and you wonder where they get your rates from. However, *Manager E* says, you should do your very best and try to stay on top of things.

Moreover, *Manager E* talked about the whole reservations process which changed from request over fax and telephone to online bookings. This results in the necessity of having a good website because if something does not work, you quickly lose the customer to one of the many booking platforms. *Manager F* thinks that hotels might have underestimated this big change a bit. Not only has the shift from telephone to online booking made a difference for *Manager B* but also the change from resort hotel to a city hotel. The city hotel is fast-moving and has a bigger focus on pricing and market image whereas the resort hotel has certain holiday times and a different focus. Having now everything online provides more visibility to the clients, which results in checking different portals and booking through different channels than it used to be (*Manager A*). These changes are comparable with the description of Mahmoud (2015). Tasks like analyzing data, identifying trends and making decision about rates changed to a more complex process. OTAs, mobile marketing, hyper-

interactive consumers and direct competitors who consistently undercut prices extended the work of a revenue manager (Mahmoud, 2015).

Obviously, the guest behaviour also shifted in the five-star segment. *Manager B* says that also the high end customer does not just accept a price anymore. She/he also compares prices online to check for the best rate. The fast development of the internet changed a lot as it gives more transparency, comparability, a big variety of portals, companies who sell your product and the easiness of searching. According to *Manager D*, this is what has influenced RM the most in the past years. Furthermore, she describes the strategic challenges such as pricing as also the competitor offers are more transparent. Lastly, *Manager F* equally mentioned the SM platforms as a rather new phenomenon, which – in her view – should use be used actively in the hospitality sector. It is not something brand-new but as a consultant she still knows hotels with the problem of using social media as a sufficient marketing channel. The topic got more complex (*Manager D*).

Social Media platforms

To identify the SM platforms used by the five different hotels it was the easiest to see which linkages were placed on each homepage. On the webpage of the hotel belonging to an international chain focusing on business travellers, no icons for SM pages were found. However, the reviews and rating of TripAdvisor appears on the homepage. Moreover, Facebook and Twitter are used though there is no linkage provided. Furthermore the homepage of the luxury property was analyzed and the icons of Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube were identified. The Marketing & E Commerce Manager of the hotel explained that a direct linkage to TripAdvisor does not exist yet. At the moment the website is quite static and there is no possibility to include a widget for this review platform due to technical limitations. The homepage of the design hotel at the Ringstraße is offers quite a long list of SM linkages, namely Facebook, Flickr, Foursquare, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. The revenue manager of this hotel mentioned that they set great importance on SM as they have a lot to present. Their house is very vibrant with a lot happening and they are very active and creative with things they want to present and represent. Moreover, art and events play a

major role. There is always something happening. Therefore one person was hired at the sales department who looks after posts, likes and updates. The fourth hotels homepage checked also showed a long list of icon linkages to different SM platforms. It included Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Piterest, Tripadvisor and Weibo. The last does not sound familiar because it is a Chinese micro blogging site like Twitter. This involvement of the Chinese market is very interesting and compared to the other hotels unique. Unfortunately, the Revenue Manager of this hotel did not know underlying strategies, neither since when this channel is active nor if it is useful. She stated that in general the Chinese market is important and fast moving and therefore it is important to work with it. Staying up to the pulse of time is also what the consultant said. There is no time for lying back as everything changes so quickly. For her the permanent change is the new normal. Also the geographical adaptation is important because not only China have their own platforms but probably the Arabic countries too.

Comparing the SM platforms used by the hotels to the grouped list mentioned in the literature it is clear that a good mixture of different types is used.

Importance of meetings

Manager B shares the opinion that it gets more difficult to assign different strategies and tasks to only one department. In general she thinks that everybody needs to talk with each other to make things work. Especially in E-Commerce, Public Relations, Revenue and Sales this plays an important role. The blurring lines between revenue management in particular when it comes to managing the customer experience as part of the overall revenue strategy were mentioned by Holt (2013). For this cause weekly meetings are held where future strategies are planned. Also data is analyzed together as different departments have different inputs and insights and therefore it is best to combine the various aspects. Mahmoud (2015) mentions the extension of solely revenue issues to sales and marketing tasks in regards to RM. The meeting once a week was also mentioned by *Manager F* when she was asked if she works with data and reports of SM and review platforms she said definitely. This is very important as it is unfiltered guest feedback and it has to be taken seriously. Usually,

you have a weekly revenue meeting where such things are actively included. It is about online valuations which are really important for the hospitality industry, data and facts of SM and the whole intelligence you gain about your guests through SM. Moreover somebody has to be responsible so that every negative comment is looked after.

Dealing with different types of comments

For such negative or even unfair comments the hotels apply various strategies. According to the study of Nieto, Hernández-Maesro and Muñoz-Gallego (2014) the content (negative or positive) is not primary to get a positive relationship between number of reviews and bookings. However, for the revenue managers every negative booking is critical and will be analyzed. *Manager C* describes the procedure as difficult. They do have a procedure how to handle which sort of review. First, they asses if the comment is positive, negative or neutral. If it is bad they need to think if it is justified or not and if it is unfair there is the possibility on TripAdvisor to take it down of the website. A declaration is needed. Once, in another hotel where *Manager C* worked they took one review down about a case of food poisoning and as they were able to proof that it was not true. However, there are also cases where the guest just has a certain opinion and the hotel has a different one but it does not contradict the regulations of TripAdvisor. Those guidelines are really strict and at the end of the day they just do not want to limit the customer. It is also important to mention that such extreme problems do not happen often. The goal is to respond online and then try to have further discussions offline. Also for *Manager A* the handling of complaints is an important topic: “We hired somebody last year for this job. We actually created a new position which focuses on this segment, to be more active and to be more present. Our goal is to be more visible in the market. However it is also important for customer satisfaction because with social media you can react to comments and this gives sort of a commitment from the company to the customer. It shows that you really are concerned about the issues they have. Or that you are thankful if they leave a good resume on Tripadvisor or Booking.com. With our company we have a program so we get all the comments in a list to actually see all the things which go wrong and we can action on this. We will always try to answer on every comment no matter if it is positive or negative. Negative of course

depends on which kind of comment it is because sometimes comments are not 100 percent fair. Then we would try to take it offline with the customer instead of online. Online we would always say ‘okay we understand you had an issue, however we would be happy to help you and improve our service’ and then we would get in contact personally because some discussions you do not want to have online. If another customer sees that there is a negative comment and he notices a reply of the hotel they will probably react more positive to it. Instead, if there is a discussion on the platform and we say this is not true and the client has a different opinion, the hotel will always be wrong from a client’s perspective.” *Manager D* raises an important fact when she said that you never receive feedback from 100 percent of the guest but rather from customers who were really happy or unsatisfied. Also she thinks a lot of things can go wrong with handling bad reviews. The Guest Relations Manager takes care of such cases personally. For her it has high priority as the internet is open to everybody. It is important to pay attention to how to react especially when the comment is not positive the right words have to be chosen.

Social Media as a new distribution channel

According to the paper by Noone, McGuire and Rohlfes (2011), the linkage between a SM site and a hotel’s private booking engine is a great opportunity to save distribution costs. *Manager A* explained that this direct linkage from Facebook to the booking platform was only introduced in October 2014 but, unfortunately, he does not have any possibility to find out how many of his guests book through this channel. This linkage appears very important to *Manager F* because she thinks that hotels should do everything to get customers onto their own website. Everything that encourages a customer not to book via an OTA but directly with the hotel needs trying. And she believes that if a link is provided, people will use it. *Manager C* said that every link to one’s own booking engine has a tracking code attached for evaluating its efficiency. The bookings generated via Facebook are minor but it turned out that TripAdvisor is a good channel for generating bookings. Especially in the opening phase of the luxury hotel at the Ringstraße they received a lot of reservations via this platform. To *Manager C* this is quite logical because TripAdvisor is a review platform which is also the first information source people use before booking a hotel. The internet is used by 84 percent of travellers to plan their trips

(Torres, 2010) and approximately 75 percent take online reviews into account (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008). The luxury hotel on the Ringstraße pays extra for a so-called 'business listing' in order to be able to put special offers on TripAdvisor. Also for *Manager D* it is possible to reconstruct where the clicks are coming from.

Push strategies on Social Media Platforms

Not only saving distribution costs can be an opportunity of SM but also to creating demand with push strategies on various SM channels (Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011). To find out if such strategies were used the example of the High Peaks Resort in Lake Placid mentioned previously was shortly described to the managers. So they had an idea how such campaigns could look like. *Manager A* mentioned the approach as interesting but also described his concerns and an example from his experience: "In my opinion these things are always difficult to measure and that is the point with SM because we do not know what the real outcome is. So you can try this sort of campaigns. I do remember from the previous hotel I worked for that we were very active on SM and we did a campaign on Foursquare. You would always get a free coffee if you became the president or major or something like that. At this time this was very popular in the Netherlands. So we really had guests coming for that but I would not say we made any money with it. For sure not, but the point is the costs you have. What you invest to make it attractive for the customer is actually not always paying off. So this is more for image building or to make you more visible than for really making money. For visibility I believe it is good. For really saying I want to push my business I do not think it helps. These are too short terms and too small impacts to actually work. We have one newly opened hotel and there SM is key because nobody knows it is new, so I need to make sure everybody knows it is new. I think for visibility and for the future it is important but for short term it will not benefit you." *Manager F* shares this opinion and generally thinks that this is a bit extreme, especially the low prices. She would not do this as in a way this also lowers the value of the product. If somebody who paid much more hears about the low price he/she will think he/she got ripped off. Obviously, the customers who are targeted with this campaign will come once and never again. No one attracted by the special price would pay the regular price. This can be a strategy to increase the awareness but *Manager F* does not think that this offer is appealing to the target

market of the hotel. The bad price influence of such campaigns is also a concern of *Manager B* as she does not want their prices to be influenced in a negative way. *Manager D* does not use the SM channels to post last minute offers but if they have packages or special offers then they use SM for distribution. The product is shortly described and a link to their booking platform is added for a fast and easy booking process. The response of *Manager E* was very similar as she thinks that it is a very general platform. It is mostly used to show the product rather than concrete offers. She uses it to distribute new offers, news and packages. For example a special for Valentine's Day, mother's day or if something new is offered in the restaurant. Those offers are not exclusively for Facebook but are offered over all their channels. This strategy of the design hotel is not shared by the Marketing & E Commerce Manager of the luxury hotel. She states that Facebook is not an active booking channel and they are not using it to post promotions as their experience showed that this is not what their guests are interested in. What they want to gain is insight, posts from behind the scenes or they want to get to know the staff. Bookings are rarely generated.

Manager B introduced a reward system to promote the SM channel Facebook. They have a program called Flip. If somebody books a room with them, shares this on Facebook and because of this post a friend also books he gets a free upgrade or similar. Or the person who publishes gets a VIP treatment. Those are incentives to get guests to share their bookings with the hotel so all friends can see it.

Blogging is, according to *Manager C* more of a Public Relation (PR) area but still she explained it a bit. From literature we know that blogs are sites where people write about certain interests and experiences. *Manager C* explained that it is common practice that PR invites bloggers and journalists to write hopefully, something positive about the hotel. Blogs have - compared to newspapers and magazines - the advantage of happening online. Vienna has a very big blogger scene especially in the F&B area. She recognizes this a lot when it comes to the breakfast. It gets described as the best breakfast in town. Of course they use this to their advantage. If something great is written about the house, they post this on their SM platforms. Such things are really important for the online appearance. If the hotel gets listed

somewhere they always try to add a link to their website to rise activity on their own page. Great for them is that everything is measurable.

The importance of test and measure is also addressed by Hubbs (2013), who suggests finding out which strategy harmonizes with the network and also identifying what helps to expand the network. The feature of tracking all activities is essential to *Manager C* as otherwise it would be impossible to see if the time and the money invested bring any returns. She thinks that with every activity they do it is necessary to see the outcome, to see if it was meaningful and in which direction it is going.

Analytical tools

It is important to get to know our guests and to find out how they perceive the hotel because the image is crucial for the willingness to book (Leposa, 2014). With today's technology it is easy to retrieve data from various sources especially open data including SM and review sites (Anderson, 2012). In order to organize all the reviews and data about a property in the World Wide Web an analytical tool is used. TripAdvisor provides a free tool called ReviewAnalyst and Google supports us with GoogleAnalytics. The consultant said that not everyone is yet using such tools but actually it is so important to regularly check the reviews. The best thing to do is to have a tool which combines all review platforms to show the daily comments in order to be able to react to a negative review immediately. Unfortunately, the negative comments get looked at more often and therefore it is important to look after them. She absolutely recommends such a tool to everybody. Interestingly, *Manager C* is using the combining tool ReviewPro and, additionally, ReviewAnalyst because on TripAdvisor she gets even more detailed information about the competitors. It helps if she realizes that another hotel is doing really well to analyze the changes in detail. Moreover, ReviewPro simplifies a lot. Back in the old days she had to go on every review platform to check for comments and now the analytical tool does this for her. The system collects all the reviews which are in the internet and at the end of the day *Manager C* receives the daily report. These reports are an important base for discussion. In line with this is the answer of *Manager D*. She says that it is important to have a tool which bundles all the information of the various platforms in order to work with this information. For *Manager E* it looks different as

the hotel receives such reports from an agency which provides the hotel with the information they need about various platforms. Two suggestions of Hubbs (2013) are clearly fulfilled here. First: “Monitor SM all the time. There are several services available that help hotels monitor the dialogue and provide analytics behind the conversation. Some hotels have these tools provided to them by the brands (and many do not use them), while others shop around for the best in class provider out there. Regardless, get help so you can synthesize the conversations” (Hubbs, 2013). And second: “Use the data. Use trend and competitive analyses to identify quantitative options. Read reviews and use semantic analysis tools to look at qualitative information. Include this detail in your strategy discussions so you can make decisions and act” (Hubbs, 2013). *Manager F* shares this attitude. For the consultant reputation management is essential because there are studies which show that 80 percent of the people who book a hotel look at the reviews first. According to the World Travel market report, 35 percent of people change their choice of hotel after reading online reviews (Blal & Sturman, 2014). *Manager F* points out the connection. Unfortunately, the reviews have developed to the most important. Also, the reviews are determining for pricing. If a hotel has good reviews an increase in price is possible. Therefore, we can say it is essential for RM and everything is connected.

Connection between Social Media and price

In this context Anderson’s (2012) paper is relevant. It showed the impact of SM on the lodging performance. His research identified that generally the percentage of people consulting TripAdvisor has increased as well the quantity of reviews consumers read before they book. This paper also pointed out that, if a hotel is able to increase its rating by one point (e.g. 3.2 to 4.2 on a 5 point scale), the price can be increased by 11.2 percent and the purchase probability maintained. These findings show the importance of customer generated content. The study was presented to the interview partners and their opinion about it was asked for. *Manager C* said that it is actually not that easy. *Manager B* explained the issues in more detail as it is difficult. She thinks it is very important but it is not possible to determine a price on the basis of reviews only. Personally, she would not do it as you also have to keep an eye on your market and competitors. *Manager B* cannot increase the price by 30

Euros if the comp-set charges 30 euro less and there is not enough demand in the city. There are so many more factors which need to be considered. It might be a supplement for making a decision if she wants to increase her price but it is not the only base. *Manager E* shares her scepticism. As a revenue manager she would not venture to increase her prices by 11 percent just because she managed to increase the ratings by one point. 11 percent is a lot. In a price-sensitive market like Vienna this can be risky. It is also difficult to increase prices if you moved from rank 10 to rank 5. Probably it is possible to charge higher prices if you are in the top 10. This also depends on the destination and the number of hotels. In Paris this might be easier than in Vienna. Concerning the study of Anderson (2012), *Manager D* thinks that the evaluation of cost-benefit is an important topic. Therefore it is imaginable that a positive feedback supports a stable price level. The biggest topic of the reviews is value for money. People do not want to pay a lot of money for a service which does not match the price. Also customers booking in the five star categories look for the best service for their money. The consultant added that she would sign this study to a 100 percent. Meanwhile this is really the most important thing because nobody believes the advertisements anymore. Consumers want feedback of other travellers. Of course also in this area a few things are manipulated but people still trust it more. We will see how long this is going to last but right now reviews are essential. The managers would not risk a high increase of 11 percent of their prices just because they got better scores on TripAdvisor. There is so much more to take into consideration, especially Vienna as a market and the competitors. However, everybody acknowledges the importance of customer generated content regarding the purchasing decision.

Expand knowledge about customers

Probably the usage of the data should be looked into more detail. As Jones (2009) mentioned, SM is a possibility to get to know the customers' needs and wants. People use SM as a convenient way to complain and share their experience (Sigala, Christou and Gretzel, 2012). *Manager A's* answer to the question if he thinks that SM helps to get to know customers better was a definite "Yes, of course", but the actual implementation was a bit more difficult as he explained: "I think it depends a bit on the type of hotel you have. Our brand is focused on business travellers.

However, we are still open to everybody; we do not have a certain direction of clients. We do not say this is the age we want to attract, nationality or religion. We do not have a real focus there. If you have a real focused hotel in a certain market, around a certain client's age, it is easier to take your lessons out of the feedback. We get feedback from somebody who is eighty years old and also from a Japanese tour guide who was here with a group of fifty people. This is what makes it completely different. However, we always try. If we see that feedback comes from different age groups but always the same matter, we will of course investigate the overall picture and try to suit their needs. We need to look at it from a broader perspective. We always want to be good for everybody and not for only one clientele. It is a bit difficult." *Manager B* explains different aspects of reviews and evaluations because they are an essential part which helps to work on the service quality. Everything is collected in one document and then filtered. It is crucial to know the areas of complaint to be able to change it. Equally important are comments about things which are valued by the customer and help to enhance the guest's experience. For example, extras which could be included in a suite. A great customer service will establish guest loyalty (Evision Worldwide LLC, 2012).

Do Social Media sites represent a distinct market segment or an alternate communication channel for existing segments?

One question which arises in the paper of Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) is: "Do SM sites represent a distinct market segment or an alternate communication channel for existing segments?" For *Manager D* it is a new source but it is not a new segment because this online segment has existed for quite some time. It is something that could be looked into but at the moment it is categorized under online bookings as it is all over the internet. *Manager B* answered the question similarly. It is a new channel and not a new segment. For her these are all direct, individual bookings. There are group bookings, individual bookings and contract bookings. It is a new channel which needs to be observed properly to decide if you go through this or another channel but it cannot be seen as a segment. Both see SM as a new and important channel but not as a relevant segment. Other managers thought the question was really good, interesting or difficult. *Manager E* said that this is a really good question but unfortunately she does not have an answer. It is

something she would like to know herself but she thinks it is partly this and partly that. It is hard to tell. Are they new guests? Yes and no. Obviously, those clients did not exist in these exact terms as SM did not exist. Are they now new clients because Facebook was invented...not necessarily. Probably they would have recognized the hotel over a different channel as well. There are presumably a small percentage of people who are really SM affine so that they follow our hotel and therefore book with us but if we look at the whole hotel this is only a very small percentage. Partly this and partly that was also *Manager D's* comment. As she tries to reach and invite a rather big audience via Facebook it can be said that these people are guests who stay with us but also people who are interested in our product, the brand or the company. Therefore, definitely both. *Manager F*, however, has a different point of view. She perceives this as an interesting question. If we talk about online reviews she thinks that this is an existing target market, so all the reviews on booking.com etc. But if we only talk about SM she thinks that this gives a possibility to also reach the younger target group. If you are not active on SM, you exclude a certain group of people because generation Y lives with SM. For them it is normal and the easiest way of communication and there is no way around it. This question was hard to answer for *Manager A*: "I do not know. This is a difficult question. I think the clientele that we have is probably more actively using it now, for example with complaints. Some people do not have it in their nature to complain. If there is something wrong with the check in for example they now walk up to their room and post it. This is one reason why we try to use SM actively. So, if we see this complaint in time we are able to contact the client directly after reading on SM what went wrong. I think this is more an add-on that the clients use and not some tool to find a room. However, it can also be that people see it through other people liking it and think that they would book this hotel if they go to Vienna. This is possible, but I do not have a way of measuring it. This is quite difficult and I do not have a sufficient answer to it." The answers might vary but SM definitely plays an important role also if it might not be the role of a new segment.

Future development

As nowadays - in our fast-living world - everything changes and develops so quickly, the managers were asked how they see the future in regard to SM. Will the

importance increase even more? Will new platforms arise or is it impossible to displace big players like Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor and others? The consultant, *Manager F* holds the following view. The importance of SM and reviews will last because the customers want the exchange of experience. New portals will be developed and she thinks that Facebook will lose power. In her opinion forums with different target groups will grow. For example there will be one for people with cultural interest and another for adventure holidays. She thinks the numbers of platforms will grow and will target different special interest groups. The reason why she sees Facebook losing power is that the portals which are very popular have an overflow of advertisement and this is what people get annoyed by. This is a down side because as soon as anything gets popular everybody wants to get a share of the success. However, she is confident that the exchange will happen via SM and therefore traditional marketing will lose importance. People look for exchange with people having the same interest and not for glossy ads. *Manager E* sees the excitement of the future. It will stay fascinating because a lot of things will happen where we do not know anything about it yet. RM is - compared with other departments in the hotel - a young area also if it is taken for granted in the big chains. In the case of SM she thinks that someday the hype will slow down. Definitely new things will develop but she does not think that SM will be a booking channel. *Manager E* does not know but she cannot imagine that it will have big influence on the booking behaviour. For her it seems important that every hotel uses SM but more for marketing and image reasons and less for reservations. *Manager C* rather concentrates on the future development of the customer. According to her, guests will be able to handle reviews in a different way. People will learn how to interpret a review. Take for example, her with her knowledge now; if she looks at reviews for her private holiday she knows how to judge them. If there is one day with only positive feedback and on the next day a negative one appears, she knows that there will always be guests who have a bad day or just like to complain. In future, *Manager C* believes that customers will be better able to realise this as well. Because they deal with it more often and so their judgement will develop. The future of hospitality is analyzed by *Manager B* in the following way. She already recognizes that the industry starts to defend itself against rate parity with the OTAs and also against unfair reviews because they may destroy their reputation. Fences

need to be developed if reputational damage is caused so that this cannot be seen on SM.

4.1 Limitations

The answers given only reflect the opinions and knowledge of five revenue managers. Knowing that everyone has been doing his/her job for various years in big high class hotels, the interviewees can be seen as experts. They all work or worked for hotels belonging to an international group. However, this does not mean that other managers of the same group would give the same answers. Furthermore, this study was only undertaken among people working in the five-star segment. Again, other segments might have a complete different approach. Having the geographical limitation of Vienna it should not be assumed experts in other cities would answer the same. However, Vienna is the capital of a European country with high tourism demand and a broad range of international hotel brands.

For further research one might increase the sample size including more countries but keeping only one segment. Another option would be the broadening to various hotel segments but keeping the geographical area rather limited. Additionally, if the sample size increases in either way, the personal interview method does not seem feasible. Both cost and work load would be too high.

As this was my first qualitative research, the quality of the research differs from interviews taken by professionals. Also, the unavoidable presence of the researcher at data collection can affect the subjects' responses (Anderson, 2010)

Although this study was only carried out with five managers with the same job, in the same hotel segment it can be clearly seen that not all share the same opinion. We identified both areas with similarities and also topics with diverse answers. Probably this would be different with a questionnaire containing only closed questions resulting in one out of two options as opposed to the interviews at issue where the interviewees could answer without any restrictions.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to find out if SM has an impact on RM. First, the different forms of SM were identified to gain a broader understanding of this new way of communication. As we focus on the hospitality industry the adaptation of SM in this sector in general was determined and a great importance discovered. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the subject, the main tasks and importance of RM were summarized. Along with the online channels greater price transparency and an easier way for feedback were given. Furthermore, previous studies on SM in connection with RM were identified. The framework for evaluating SM related RM opportunities by Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) served as an important base for research.

In order to answer the research question, five interviews with revenue manager of luxury hotels in Vienna were held. All interviewees work in the field of RM since various years and most of them started their career in the Reservations Department.

The major change for all managers was the development of the OTAs which have a great influence on the channel management of RM. This new platforms have a great power over hotels as this way of online distribution is needed but also very expensive. With the fast development of the internet a bigger variety of platforms result in more transparency and comparability. Booking.com, for example, is also identified as a social purchase/review site because you have the possibility to purchase a hotel room and also to rate and review on the products. Therefore, the first influences of SM on RM can be seen as the OTAs.

Further, it can be seen that reports on reviews of various SM platforms need to be discussed by various departments at a hotel. The important guest feedback has to be used actively when deciding on strategies. Valuations, reviews and ratings on SM can be seen as base for a greater importance on teamwork between various departments which includes RM. Especially the negative reviews have to be taken good care of. This will support a positive image and increase customer satisfaction.

Using SM as a booking channel in order to save distribution costs is used. All hotels have a direct booking possibility on their Facebook pages. However, it is not seen as

a sufficient online channel. In contrast to Facebook, TripAdvisor was identified as an important channel by one manager. Furthermore, it was stated that everything has to be tried to encourage customers to book on the hotels own website and not via OTAs. Therefore, when establishing the channel management strategy it can be worth looking at different SM platforms.

The example mentioned for demand creation via campaigns on SM was not seen as realistic as guests might only come this one time for the special offer and never again. However, some managers use their SM pages to post general packages and special offers which are promoted via all online and offline channels and are not solely created for SM. Further, the importance of the platforms for more visibility and image building was identified. Also at one hotel they found that their guests are more interested into posts about behind the scenes rather than offers which serves as an important base for further strategies.

Tracking data of various booking channels is very important also to revenue managers as it helps to identify if investments were useful or not. Unfortunately, not all hotels have yet the possibility of tracking how many bookings come via Facebook for example.

Another influence on RM is the new data available from SM as a new open source. In order to get organized, analytical tools are used. TripAdvisor offers a free tool to support competitor comparisons and review identifications. However, an analytical tool which filters all platforms and provides daily reports is a useful investment for a business. Especially for hotels with high customer involvement and regular negative feedback which needs to be looked after. Also the reports can serve as discussion base about customer satisfaction and product quality as well as support a decision making process. Furthermore, reviews can help to get to know your guests better, identify their needs and wants in order to enhance their experience which is one of the overall goals of a hotel operator – satisfied customers.

Regarding the study by Anderson (2012) not all revenue manager agreed with his approach. However, an importance on the cost-benefit evaluation was stated which is a major topic in online reviews. People no longer compare prices only but also look for the best service for their money regardless which hotel category. As online

reviews are not the only influence on pricing, the majority would not increase prices just because their rating improved but clearly only hotels with good reviews and ratings are able to increase their prices.

One of the unanswered questions in the paper of Noone, McGuire and Rohlfs (2011) could not be answered clearly. “Do SM sites represent a distinct market segment or an alternative communication channel for existing segments?” All in all, it is definitely seen as a new and important channel but probably not all SM users are also new customers. The platforms are important to young generations but also other age groups are highly involved in the new development.

Expectations for the future vary, however nobody thinks that SM will distinguish totally. Probably the importance of exchange about experiences will stay and more focused SM platforms will arise. Also the influence on RM might increase as it is seen as a rather young department in the hospitality industry. Further, there is hope that customers gain a better judgement when reading reviews.

Manager F identified a nice connection of SM and RM: Dynamic pricing is the control of prices according to offer and demand. The price the product is sold for depends heavily on the hotels positioning. The positioning means which image the hotel transports. Channels of image transportation changed with the arise of SM. Therefore, everybody not using SM loses a lot of market presence.

In conclusion, influences of SM on some areas of RM were identified. Also, the overall importance of SM for a hotel is important to mention. RM is a rather young area in the hospitality sector and in combination with the new development of SM a good base for further research.

5.1 Recommendations

Overall, the SM platforms used by the hotels were familiar except for Weibo which is used by one business. This platform is used in China instead of the well-known Twitter. To increase awareness on the Chinese market, their SM platforms can serve as a great channel. Furthermore, TripAdvisor was only mentioned by one manager as a sufficient online channel and could therefore be worth trying by other companies.

In order to use the SM channels more affectively it can be worth to find out what guests are looking for on the platforms and what they are interested in. Additionally, every channel of distribution needs to be replicable to identify its usefulness.

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7 Appendix

7.1 Interview 1

Interviewer

Since when are you Revenue Manager?

Manager A

In Vienna 1,5 years before that Assistant Revenue Manager for 11 months in Vienna. 8 years ago position in reservations combined with revenue management.

Interviewer

Would you say that your work has changed in the last 5 years? In regards to new technologies, etc. Would you say revenue management grew as well?

Manager A

Partly yes, but not always the systems and I think this is where the border lies. Now is more online. More visibility from clients side. They use different websites, they use Trivago, Tripadvisor, etc. You have does points where clients will look in different portals and also book through different channels as they did before. The hotel website for example is not that important anymore. You have booking.com and Expedia they take sort of over.

Interviewer

Those new channels seem very important for your job. Would you say you had to learn new things to deal with the development in your job? Did you grow along with the development?

Manager A

I think so. It changes so quickly and there are so many things you need to consider. For example, Booking.com is a nice tool but I need to pay a lot of commission to them, therefore I rather have it through my own website than through them. Still I have no choice than use booking otherwise I would never have the audits what I now have. That is sort of the things where I now have to find a way or the hotels try to find a way “how can we minimize our commission costs and still make sure we achieve the same revenue results”. How more channels you use and the more you are dependent on these channels and not from your own website, the less control you have yourself about the business. Because if everything is with booking and Expedia and nothing with myself anymore, they can say I increase my commission by 5 % I can only say ‘yes’ in the end and that is not what we want.

Interviewer

As you just mentioned, your hotel uses Tripadvisor, Facebook, Twitter and online booking platforms. I also recognized that you can actually have the opportunity to book directly on your facebook page. Do you know when you introduced this system?

Manager A

It was in October 2014.

Interviewer

So quite recently. It seems all of the channels are relevant for your job. There is not one channel where you can say you do not look into that but for example marketing uses it a lot.

Manager A

Difficult to say because they work all differently. Booking.com and Expedia they work with a direct connection. From our hotel they have direct connection to my systems so the rate which I am selling on my website is automatically reflected on their website as well. Then you have the wholesaler partners like Gulliver, Tourico and they work with fixed rates they get from us and they have allotments and we have a part freesale where I have the extranet of the freesale where I have to open and close the allotments. So I also have systems which I need to control in a more manual way. It is quite complex. For me it would be easier if everything would be directly connected. I also think that this will be the future of all this channels. It would be easier for the revenue manager and also for the partner themselves because now they have people loading all this rates one by one on a daily basis and closing this rates and if it would be connected to my system directly it could all be done automatically. There are still a lot of channels where I do the manual control which we are now reviewing to see how much they are producing because if they do not produce or only 20 room nights a year it is not interesting for this size of properties. Actually not worth the work, time and effort I put in. Probably costs more than they are producing. It would not be worth keeping those channels.

Interviewer

You are selecting the channels you are using?

Manager A

Yes I am selecting. I will always try because the client will say you do not give me a chance. I will give them a chance and then they need to prove themselves for a certain period. After this period I will review this and see if it worked and if they produced what they said they produce or if this is not the case. Obviously if it is not the case I will stop.

Interviewer

So is it your daily business, using data from social media platforms.

Manager A

Yes, and it is so much that you cannot handle it all. That is the critical point. Visibility is enormously. And then you have this partners like tourico and gullivers who get certain fixed rates from me and they sell those rates through other partners, they do marge ups, they put a certain percentage on top of this, to make profit of course and this is sometimes selling the rates cheaper as they are allowed to. Meaning if you then sometimes go on a website with price comparisons you see a channel that I never heard before, where I do not have a contract that is selling cheaper than they are allowed to. Then I try to book this to see who is behind this channel and then I can write my partners to tell them their partner is actually not selling our prices correctly. The partner needs to take corrections. There is so much around it that you actually sometimes cannot figure out who the end client is.

Interviewer

This sounds really difficult. I think it used to be easier. If I now compare this to the tasks of a revenue manager which we learned (find target market, set price, etc.) this sounds more like you really check on your partners to see if they really do what you agreed on doing.

Manager A

Yes it is. Obviously it depends on what kind of hotel you have. We for example have a best rate guarantee on our website. So we promise our customers that the best rate they can buy is on our website. And then of course with the above things happening I cannot keep this promise. Clients then have the right for the full stay free of charge and \$50 on top because this is our policy. Therefore I have no choice of checking this kind of things otherwise it will cost me a lot of money in the end. Sometimes it is not even three partners but then there is one partner who is selling it further and there is endless ways. The revenue managers from the big hotels have a regular meeting and they are all experiencing the same issues which are very interesting. Unfortunately there are limits in our power what we can do about it. But we need to follow; we do not have a choice, because without it there would also not be hotel rooms booked in the end.

Interviewer

Do you think there are hotels or chains which actually do not use social media sites?
Or do you think nowadays there is no way around?

Manager A

I think many of them are using it. Our company is using it a lot in all properties I think. Intercontinental and Marriott are using it as well. I think all the bigger ones for sure do it. I do not think we all do it that actively. We have one person really hired here. She is a Marketing assistant but she is focused on Social Media. She updates all the websites, Facebook, Foursquare, all those things. We have it all and she makes sure those sites are updated on a regular basis. We also have a Twitter account with Hilton so we try to make sure that we show our visibility. In the end social media should never be a commercial purpose it should always be an informational tool. It is all about being present. Because it is not interesting if you only have posts about how cheap the rooms are. But if you see the lobby is renewed or they are doing something special in the bar or similar it is a different sort of story.

Interviewer

Would you say social media is a new market segment? People who are using social media excessively are they a new market segment or do you think the market segments are the same but now people started using social media additionally?

Manager A

I do not now. This is a difficult question. I think the clientele what we have is now more actively using probably and I think..for example with complaints..some people do not have it in their nature to complain if there is something wrong with the check in for example they now walk up to their room and write "check in was not as nice as I expected it". This is one reason why we try to use SM actively. So if we see this in time we are able to contact the client directly after reading on SM what went wrong. I think this is more an add-on that the clients use and not something to find a room. However, it can also be that people see it through other people liking it and think "oh there is a property of this brand in Vienna, it looks nice, if I go to Vienna I would book that one". That can be but I do not have a way of measuring that. This is quite difficult and I do not have a sufficient answer to it.

Interviewer

We talked about the direct way of booking through Facebook. Could you tell me if this is a sufficient channel for you?

Manager A

If you try to book via Facebook you come automatically to our website. So I cannot track how many really go through Facebook. But this would be really interesting to know. Unfortunately we can not track it.

Interviewer

What is your future strategy with social media? Do you think it is going to grow bigger and it will get more difficult?

Manager A

We hired somebody last year for this job. We actually created a new position for this which focuses on this segment, to be more active and to be more present. Our goal is to be more visible in the market. However it is also important for customer satisfaction because with social media you can react to comments and this gives sort of a commitment from the company to the customer. It shows that you really are concerned about the issues they have. Or that you are thankful if they leave a good resume on Tripadvisor or Booking.com. With our brand we have a program so we get all the comments in a list so we actually see all the things which go wrong and we can action on this. We will always try to answer on every comment no matter if it is positive or negative. Negative of course it depends which kind of comment it is because sometimes comments are not 100% fair then we would try to take it offline with the customer instead of online. Online we would always say 'okay we understand you had an issue, however we would be happy to help you and improve our service' and then we would get in contact personally because some discussions you do not want to have online. If another customer sees that there is a negative comment and he notices a reply of the hotel they will probably react more positive to it. Instead, if there is a discussion on the platform and we say this is not true and the client has a different opinion, the hotel will always be wrong from a clients perspective.

Interviewer

According to what you said the social media platforms get checked regularly and you employ one person who is responsible for it.

Manager A

Every hotel has one key person who is responsible for the updates.

Interviewer

We talked about customer satisfaction using social media. Do you also do marketing? Pull or push strategies? For example last minute offers on SM platforms? Twitter? There is an example from a paper I read that a Mountain resort offered special rates according to the height of the mountains surrounding them. For example because the mountain is 3549 meters high the rate today is \$35,49. This sounds really interesting but do you think this is feasible/realistic, having last minute marketing strategies only via SM?

Manager A

I think the approach is interesting. In my opinion these things are always difficult to measure and that is the point with social media because we do not know what the real outcome is. So you can try this sort of campaigns...I do remember from the previous hotel I worked we were very active on social media and we did a campaign on Foursquare. You would get always a free coffee if you become the president or major or something like that. At this time in the Netherlands this was very popular so we really had guests coming for that but I would not say we made any money with it. For sure not, but the point is the cost you have, what you invest to make it attractive for the customer is actually not always paying off. So this is more for an image building or to make you more visible than for really making money with it. For visibility I believe it is good. For really saying I want to push my business I do not think it helps. These are too short terms and too small impacts that it is not working. We have the newly opened hotel and there SM is key because nobody knows it is new so I need to make sure everybody knows it is new. The same we had with Waterfront hotel. There we were really active. I think for visibility important and for the future but for short term it will not benefit you.

Interviewer

Do you think SM helps to get to know your customers better?

Manager A

Yes of course.

Interviewer

So you try to find out what they want and what their needs are? As you mentioned you use the customer reviews. It is not a new concept that you ask your guest what they want (paper questionnaires) but as you said it is now easier for them and people are more willing to share their opinions.

Manager A

I think depends a bit on the type of hotel you have. We are a brand which is focused on business travellers. However, we are still for everybody open, we do not have a certain direction of clients. We do not say this is the age we want to attract, nationality or religion. We do not have a real focus there. But if you have a real focused hotel in a certain market, like for example 25 hours hotel. This is a really nice hotel and a really new and young concept. This will not attract guest around the age of 60 because they look for complete different decor. So they really focus on a particular market of clientele. Then it is really easier to take your lessons out of the feedback because we get feedback from somebody who is 80 years old and also from a Japanese tour guide who was here with a group of 50 people. This is what makes it completely different. However, we always try. If we see that feedback always comes from different age groups and we see it is always the same, we will of course investigate the overall picture and then if we see we get it from a certain market direction travelling in July and August of course we try to suit their needs in the upcoming July and August. So this is how we look at it. We need to look at it from a broader perspective. We always want to be good for everybody and not for only one clientele. It is a bit difficult.

7.2 Interview 2

Interviewer

Seit wann sind Sie denn schon Revenue Managerin?

Manager B

Revenue Managerin seit 2008. Nicht hier in Wien aber in St. Moritz in einem Resorthotel allerdings. War auch ein Jahr weg von Revenue Management und in HR, Direktionsbereich und seit 2013 hier in Wien.

Interviewer

Würden Sie sagen, dass sich Ihre Arbeit in den letzten 5 Jahren verändert hat? Mit den neuen Technologien, online Buchungsplattformen, Facebook, soziale Medien, Tripadvisor.

Manager B

Definitiv. Grundsätzlich der unterschied für mich vom arbeiten her ist, dass ich ja vorher in einem Resorthotel war und jetzt in einem Stadthotel. In einem Stadthotel ist natürlich alles sehr sehr viel schnelllebiger und viel fokussierter auf pricing und auf market image weil in einem Resorthotel hat man natürlich die Ferienzeiten, legt man auf ganz andere Sachen Gewichtspunkte...aber jetzt von der Veränderung, ganz klar eben, die ganzen online Geschichten, die ganzen OTA's die immer viel stärker werden, wo immer mehr Abhängigkeit in dem Sinne auch besteht. Vom Gästeverhalten her hat sich auch sehr verändert, also es ist auch in der Fünf-Sterne-Hotellerie so, dass ein Preis nicht einfach so mehr akzeptiert wird, sondern das der Gast auch hier sich anlehnt und natürlich durch die ganzen online Geschichten sich vorher auch viel mehr informiert. Er hat wahrscheinlich vorher schon 5 Seiten gecheckt bevor er dann überhaupt im Hotel anruft. Und natürlich die Gewichtung von...es geht immer mehr weg von Telefon, Email und es passiert einfach wesentlich mehr online.

Interviewer

Ich habe natürlich ein bisschen nachgeschaut wenn man auf Ihre Seite geht kommen unten natürlich die Buttons für Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, YouTube. Direkt mit TripAdvisor sind Sie nicht verbunden, hat das irgendeinen speziellen Grund?

Manager C

Ja, es ist so dass unsere Webseite sehr statisch ist, das heißt wir haben einfach aktuell nicht die Möglichkeit TripAdvisor Widgets einzubauen. Es gibt ja Möglichkeiten wo man Fenster ja schon direkt auf die Webseite, Startseite einbaut

wo derjenige Kommentare schon auf Tripadvisor dann abgeben kann. Das ist auf unserer Webseite einfach technisch nicht möglich, deswegen machen wir das nicht.

Interviewer

Ok. Und welche Sozialen Medien sind jetzt für Sie als Revenue Managerin relevant? Sie sehen ja alle Reviews, Sie sehen wie viele Leute auf Ihre Facebook Seite gehen, verwenden Sie irgendwelche von diesen Daten für Ihre Arbeit?

Manager B

Grundsätzlich ja..

Manager C

Also wenn ich mal sage was grundsätzlich relevant ist, was wir aktiv nutzen. Es gibt ja eine Menge von Sozialen Medien. Aktiv nutzen tun wir Facebook, Twitter, TripAdvisor, YouTube. Das wars. Das sind die Sache die wir aktiv an den gängigsten Sozialen Medien. Natürlich Google Plus account haben wir nutzen wir nicht aktiv, Instagram ist in Bearbeitung und...eigentlich ist hauptsächlich Facebook, Tripadvisor das womit wir auch arbeiten beziehungsweise was am meisten auch bei uns an Arbeit vorkommt. Wo wir sagen, ok wir reden über diese Sozialen Medien und sagen...ok...was passiert gerade da. Wir haben auch ein System, es heißt ReviewPro.

Interviewer

Ja das konnte man auf Ihrer Seite sehen. Damit zeigen Sie Ihren Gästen auch verschiedene Kommentare auf der Website.

Manager C

Ja genau die aktuellsten Reviews. Das System das erleichter halt so einiges, also früher musste ich auf jede einzelne Seite gehen und die Reviews checken und diesmal ist es halt wirklich so...das System sammelt Reviews die irgendwo im Internet passieren oder Erwähnungen und wertet sie mir auch aus. Am Ende des Tages hab ich dann tägliche Reports die ich mir ankucken kann und an Hand der Reports...machen Bianca und ich dann auch...sprechen natürlich auch darüber ...wie aktiv das dann im Revenue Management genutzt wird ist so die Frage. Also es beeinflusst auf jeden Fall

Manager B

Ganz klar die Bewertungen und die Reviews sind natürlich ein essentieller Teil wo man immer daran arbeiten muss dass der Service stimmt. Das heißt wir sammeln das auch in eigenen Dokument und filtern dann auch heraus..also wo kommen öfter mal Beschwerden oder irgendwas, dass man daran dann arbeiten kann. Auch Kommentare von Gästen auf was Wert gelegt wird ist dann für uns einfach ein Punkt...sollte man in ein Suite vielleicht irgendetwas inkludieren. Was auch ganz interessant ist..was ein Punkt ist wofür wir es nutzen...wir haben ein Programm...Flip...das ist im Prinzip wenn jemand bucht und der das dann auf Facebook teilt und ein Freund auf Grund dessen dann bucht, dann bekommt der jetzt ein Upgrade oder sowas. Oder wenn er es auf Facebook published dann bekommt er selber ein VIP Treatment...so ein bisschen um zu animieren, dass er es auf die Social Media Seite stellt wenn er eine Buchung tätigt. Der Outcome jetzt von Buchungen die direkt über Facebook reinkommen weil wir da ja auch eine Buchungsbutton haben ist jetzt noch zu gering

Interviewer

Aber Sie haben die Möglichkeit das zu messen. Also wenn ich jetzt auf Facebook bin und den Buchungsbutton nutze der mich zu Ihrer Seite verbindet...das können Sie messen. Wie viele also über diesen Weg kommen.

Manager C

Genau wir haben das mit einem Tracking Code hinterlegt. An allen Links die irgendwie zu unserem Buchungssystem führen sind Tracking Codes drangehangen, die wir auch individuell erstellen müssen ...und was wir aber sehen ist das TripAdvisor ein sehr sehr guter Kanal ist für Buchungen zu generieren. Während unserer Opening Zeit haben wir da extrem viele Buchungen dadurch bekommen, weil natürlich wo informiert sich der Gast zuerst...auf Review Plattformen und da hat man dann auch die Möglichkeit kostenfrei...also wir haben ein Businesslisting, also das gehobene Listing wofür man auch extra Geld zahlen muss. Und das verschafft uns dann die Möglichkeit, dass wir Special Offers auf TripAdvisor stellen können und auch da die Buchungen getrackt werden.

Manager B

Das hat natürlich in der Anfangszeit weil das Hotel hat ja 2013 eröffnet... da ging das natürlich los wie „Bombe“, weil erstens natürlich mal die Neuheit am Markt da war,

es waren natürlich auch Special Offers da um das Produkt einfach am Markt zu platzieren. Ist natürlich auch nach wie vor ein sehr starker Kanal den man auch einfach nutzen muss. Ja weil es geht ja immer mehr dort hin, dass die Gäste auf die Bewertungen gehen und sich dort ihr Bild machen. Es ist auch aber...dieses ganze mit den Bewertungen online und dort zu lesen und dass sich die Gäste ihre Meinung bilden ist dennoch auch ein bisschen...ein schwieriger Faktor generell in der Hotellerie denk ich mir...weil du...weil die Leute das auch schon sehr oft nutzen um dir ein bisschen zu drohen...oder etwas rauszuholen. Das ist definitiv Fakt, also da kommen schon auch Kommentare von Gästen so wie: „Wenn ich das und das nicht bekomme, dann schreib ich einen schlechten Kommentar auf TripAdvisor“. Also das ist schon..das kommt definitiv auch vor.

Interviewer

Ok. Und haben Sie dann zum Beispiel so jemanden, den Sie einladen würden von Blogs her zum Beispiel? Es gibt ja viele Leute die schreiben so Reiseblogs und dann werden Sie quasi gebeten positive Sachen über einen zu schreiben wenn man sie einlädt. Gibt es sowas bei Ihnen auch?

Manager C

Ja das natürlich auch. Das geht dann aber mehr in die Public Relation (PR) Schiene und da ist es Gang und Gebe, dass die Blogger und Journalisten eingeladen werden und in dem Zuge dann was Positives über uns schreiben. Blog hat natürlich den Vorteil, dass es online passiert. Vor allem in Wien ist eine ganz große Blogger Szene vor allem für den F&B Bereich. Das merken wir extrem wenn's ums Frühstück geht...das Beste Frühstück in der Stadt. Das nutzen wir schon zu unserem Vorteil und natürlich können wir es dann auf unseren Sozialen Medien teilen also wenn in einem Blog was gepostet wird und vise versa. Also das ist wirklich das wo wir auch immer versuchen dass man alles so gut wie möglich online geschehen lässt. Sei es wenn wir irgendwo gelistet werden auf einer Seite XY dass wir uns drum bemühen, dass unser Website Link mit auf dieser Seite mit abgebildet wird um auch unsere Website mehr anzukurbeln. Und das schöne ist, dass alles messbar ist.

Interviewer

Würden Sie dann auch sagen, dass Sie Ihre Revenue Strategien ein bisschen darauf auslegen? Oder ist es eher nur ein Zusatz für Sie? Zum Beispiel bei Last Minute Sachen, wird dann vielleicht noch schnell ein Angebot gepostet auf Facebook?

Manager B

Gezielt auch Facebook jetzt nicht, weil der Kanal für uns jetzt noch zu klein ist unter Anführungszeichen. Es wird sicher mitgezogen...ja...aber dass man jetzt gezielt nur eigene Facebook Promotions oder so machen, das nicht. Das passiert eben mit diesem Flip was wir haben, mit Add-On so zu sagen um die Preise jetzt nicht negativ zu beeinflussen aber dennoch ein bisschen ein Goodie zu geben, einen Anreiz zu geben, dass der Gast darüber bucht, aber jetzt nicht gezielt auf diesem Kanal.

Manager C

Also Facebook ist auch kein aktiver Buchungskanal. Wir nutzen es auch nicht, wie Bianca schon gesagt hat, um viele Promotions zu posten weil wir auch aus Erfahrung bemerkt haben, das funktioniert nicht...das interessiert den Gast nicht. Was ihn interessiert sind diese Behind the Scenes...also alles was so in der Küche passiert, wenn was angerichtet wird oder die persönlichen Geschichten, das Personal wird vorgestellt. Buchungen generieren wir ganz selten.

Manager B

Ich glaub es schafft einfach mehr Awareness. Die vielleicht auch darauf beruhen, dass jemand dann bucht, aber das ist natürlich dann schwer zu tracken weil je nachdem wie aktiv du auf Facebook bist und wie viel du dem Gast im Prinzip gibst, das beeinflusst ihn natürlich aber vielleicht geht er dann drei Wochen später wirklich direkt auf die Website und bucht dann dort oder ruft an aufgrund dessen. Das ist jetzt ein bisschen schwer zu greifen.

Interviewer

Aber ich muss sagen, es ist schon toll, dass sie so viele Tracking Möglichkeiten haben. Im Hilton zum Beispiel gibt es noch nicht gibt es noch kein Tracking für Buchungen die über Facebook kommen. Es gibt den Buchungsbutton auf Ihrer Seite aber es kann noch nicht nachvollzogen werden.

Manager B

Ich glaub das ist das ganz ganz Wichtige egal was du ausprobierst und in welche Richtung du gehst du musst halt irgendwie die Möglichkeit haben weil du weißt ja sonst nicht...fruchtet es...fruchtet es nicht. Machst du dir die Arbeit umsonst? Investierst du umsonst? Also ich glaub das...bei jeder Aktion die wir machen...müssen wir die Möglichkeit haben ein Outcome einfach zu sehen, um zu sehen was ist sinnvoll und in welche Richtung gehen wir.

Interviewer

Bei TripAdvisor gibt es ja auch direkt ein TripAdvisor-Review tool um sich direkt mit anderen Hotels zu vergleichen. Nutzen Sie das auch oder nur Ihr eigenes Programm?

Manager C

Nutze ich auch weil man da noch mehr Informationen bekommt wie in unserem eigenen System und detaillierter auf die Competitors drauf greifen kann. Also wenn wir merken, dass einer von unseren Konkurrenten extrem gut ist in einem Monat gehen wir schon auch mal ins Detail auf Tripadvisor und schauen...ok woran liegt es..was passiert da gerade...was sind das für Reviews...um uns da auch einfach besser vergleichen zu können.

Interviewer

Sie sind ja auf Platz drei bei Tripadvisor, also das ist ja eigentlich schon perfekt. Ich habe auch von einer Studie gelesen von Herrn Anderson von der Cornell Universität. Er hat herausgefunden wenn man sich bei Buchungsplattformen wie Tripadvisor um einen Punkt (also von 3,3 auf 4,3 Punkte) verbessert kann man den Preis um 11,2% erhöhen ohne eine Einbuße der Auslastung. Glauben Sie, dass das wirklich so wichtig ist, diese Bewertung?

Manager B

Schwierig. Ich glaube es ist schon wichtig aber an den Bewertungen alleine den Preis festzulegen oder den Preis hochzuschrauben würde ich persönlich nicht machen weil du den Markt, deine Competition beobachten musst. Ich kann nicht einfach um 30 Euro erhöhen wenn mein ganzes Comp-Set 30 Euro unter mir liegt und der Demand in der Stadt nicht da ist. Das kommt auf so viele andere Faktoren an. Also allein auf das würde ich mich nicht berufen. Es mag vielleicht schon ein Zusatz sein um die

Entscheidung zu treffen, dass ich meinen Preis erhöhe aber sicher nicht nur auf dem basierend.

Manager C

Wenn es so leicht wäre

Interviewer

Wie glauben Sie wird es dann in Zukunft aussehen? Glauben Sie dass das noch stärker wird? Werden neue Soziale Medien dazukommen? Werden vielleicht welche wegfallen? Haben Sie da irgendeine Vorstellung? Oder eine Befürchtung?

Manager C

Ich glaube ehrlich gesagt eher, dass es ein wenig zurückgehen wird. Also jetzt aber nicht in dem Sinne, dass es nicht weniger Plattformen geben wird sondern ich glaube, dass die Gäste sich mehr und intensiver damit beschäftigen und dann natürlich auch bei manchen Reviews sehen und auch wissen wie sie die zu werten haben. Also ich zum Beispiel mit meinem Wissen jetzt, weil ich ja auf der anderen Seite bin, sehe mir jetzt wenn ich in ein anderes Hotel gehe, also Privat auf Urlaub...schau ich mir auch TripAdvisor Reviews an, aber ich weiß sie ungefähr einzuschätzen. Also wenn der an einem Tag die super positive Bewertung hat und am nächsten Tag super negativ, schau ich selber drauf und überleg...ok...es gibt immer mal einen Gast bei dem es mal komplett in die falsche Richtung läuft. Das gibt es bei uns genauso und ich kann das dann glaub ich auch besser einschätzen und ich hoffe und glaube dass es in Zukunft auch bei den anderen, bei den normalen Gästen, die nichts mit der Hotellerie zu tun haben das auch so sein wird

Manager B

Dass sie vielleicht gebildeter werden in dieser Richtung. Dass das Auge mehr geschult wird. Weil sie ja auch immer mehr damit konfrontiert sind.

Manager C

Und dass sie nicht denken...ok, da ist eine schlechte Review, deswegen gehe ich da nicht hin. Dass sie das eben auch viel besser einschätzen können

Manager B

Ja das glaub ich auch. Was ich aber auch glaub, ist das die Hotellerie und das merkt man jetzt schon mit den ganzen Diskussionen medial jetzt sei es jetzt Ratenqualität was jetzt online Travel Agencies anbelangt aber auch, dass Hotels sich auch schon zu wehren anfangen für ungerechtfertigte Reviews weil es dem Ruf des Hotels schadet. Natürlich muss das Hotel oder die Hotellerie generell jetzt auch mal agieren und Grenzen setzten...ok..das ist jetzt Rufschädigung weil die hat auf meiner Social Media Seite nichts zu suchen. Ich glaube das ist auch ein wichtiger Aspekt wieder mehr.

Interviewer

Und hat man da auch die Möglichkeit, dass man schlechte Reviews wieder runternimmt von einer Seite und das dann außerhalb mit dem Gast klären kann.

Manager C

Auf jeden Fall aber es ist sehr schwierig. Wir haben auch als Hotel Prozedere wie man mit welcher Review umgeht...man muss sie erst einschätzen die Review ob es eine positive, negative oder neutrale Review ist und wenn es eine negative ist, dann muss man überlegen..ok..ist es gerechtfertigt oder nicht und wenn es eine nicht gerechtfertigte ist, hat man bei TripAdvisor zum Beispiel die Möglichkeit es runternehmen zu lassen. Man muss eine Erklärung dazu abgeben. Es ist schwierig. Einmal hatte ich den Fall schon mal in einem anderen Hotel, da durfte ich die Review runternehmen lassen weil es um Lebensmittelvergiftung ging, es aber nachweislich nicht gestimmt hat. Es gibt aber auch andere Reviews wo es einfach die Meinung des Gastes ist und wir eine andere Meinung haben und es trotzdem nicht gegen die Richtlinien von TripAdvisor verstößt. Also die haben sehr strenge Richtlinien, aber am Ende des Tages sagen sie, sie wollen den Gast nicht einschränken. Also es passiert aber relativ selten muss man ehrlich sagen. Und dann trotzdem natürlich online antworten und versuchen die Diskussion offline zu machen. Das ist immer so unser Ziel.

Interviewer

Dann noch eine Frage. Und zwar ist es ja so, dass sie verschiedene Gästesegmente haben. Würden Sie dann sagen dass die Sozialen Medien ein neues Gästesegment eröffnet haben oder ist es eher so, dass die Gästesegmente gleich geblieben sind und das diese jetzt einfach zusätzlich diese Kanäle nutzen?

Manager B

Es ist ein neuer Kanal. Es ist kein neues Segment. Das ist für mich alles direkte, individuelle Buchung. Du hast Gruppenbuchung, Individuelle Buchung, du hast die Vertragsbuchungen und das ist einfach ein neuer Kanal der natürlich ganz genau beobachtet werden muss um eben dann sagen zu können...ok ich geh auf diesen Kanal oder ich geh auf diesen Kanal...aber es ist kein Segment in dem Sein, weil es ist ja nichts desto trotz noch immer der private direkt Bucher.

Interviewer

Wir kommen hiermit zum Ende des Interviews. Da Sie sehr viel nutzen und auch schon vieles von meinen vorbereiteten Beispielen erwähnt haben

Manager B

Aber das ist ganz interessant der Artikel den sie da haben...den werde ich mir als Bettlektüre ausdrucken. Ich habe den bereits online gefunden.

Interviewer

Ich muss sagen es ist nicht so einfach mit dem Artikel weil ich doch oft feststellen muss, dass es nicht einfach nur um Revenue Management geht. Es werden so viele Strategien mit Beispielen erwähnt wo man nicht mehr sagen kann...ok das macht wirklich nur der Revenue Manager. Deshalb bin ich auch sehr froh, dass auch Sie Frau Meyenburg heute dazugekommen sind.

Manager B

Aber das ist eh generell so...es schwimmt ja alles immer viel viel mehr und du musst ja wesentlich mehr mit den Leuten zusammenarbeiten. Es kocht nicht mehr jeder seine eigene Suppe sondern du musst da miteinander reden damit es funktioniert. Gerade E-Commerce, PR und Revenue und natürlich pro-aktiver Verkauf spielt da eine ganz ganz enge Rolle.

Interviewer

Das heißt Sie treffen sich dann auch regelmäßig?

Manager B

Ja. Ganz klar. Das muss am wöchentlichen Plan stehen, dass man mit einander spricht und schaut in welche Richtung es geht. Und auch die Daten muss man gemeinsam analysieren da haben verschiedene Abteilungen einen anderen Input oder Insight als ich und umgekehrt natürlich auch und das kombiniert sich dann.

7.3 Interview 3

Manager D

Ich hoffe natürlich, dass ich ihnen da weiterhelfen kann. Wir verwenden natürlich Social Media hier im Haus aber mehr für postings. Da geht es nicht primär um Verkauf sondern mehr um Marketing und Präsentation im Internet

Interviewer

Ich konnte ja schon feststellen wenn man auf die Homepage vom Hotel geht bekommt man gleich eine lange Liste von Verlinkungen: Facebook, Flickr, Foursquare, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter. So eine lange Liste hatte ich bei den anderen zwei Interviewpartnern nicht.

Manager D

Ja wir legen da schon viel wert darauf und es gibt auch sehr viel zu präsentieren. Unser Haus ist ja sehr lebendig, es passiert sehr viel und wir sind da sehr aktiv und kreativ auch mit Dingen die wir präsentieren und repräsentieren wollen.

Interviewer

Das scheint bei Ihnen vielleicht noch wichtiger durch den großen Kunstaspekt.

Manager D

Ja genau Kunst und die Events die wir haben. Es gibt eigentlich ständig irgendwas. Es gibt auch eine Person die sich speziell darum kümmert. Diese Person ist jetzt aber nicht bei Revenue angesiedelt sondern im Verkaufsbereich. Die kümmert sich um Posts und Updates, zählt die Likes. Ich muss sagen ich bin kein typischer Gen Y aber ein bisschen kenn ich mich schon aus.

Interviewer

Seit wann sind Sie denn schon Revenue Managerin?

Manager D

Also Reservierung/Revenue Management seit 1999. Revenue Manager seit 2002 oder so. Schon geraume Zeit und damals hat es von Social Media überhaupt noch nichts gegeben.

Interviewer

Ja, das ist auch schon meine nächste Frage, nämlich, was hat sich denn in den letzten 5 Jahren so verändert? Durch die neuen Technologien und booking.com und TripAdvisor die ja auch auf eine Art soziale Medien sind da man ja auch dort seine Kommentare hinterlassen kann. Da wird sich auch für Sie einiges verändert haben.

Manager D

Ja also ich mein natürlich diese ganze rasante Entwicklung des Internet hat unseren Bereich extremst verändert. Also einfach die Transparenz die dadurch entstanden ist, die Möglichkeit der Vergleichbarkeit, die Möglichkeit der Vielfältigkeit der Portale, der Firmen die unsere Produkte anbieten, die Möglichkeiten zu suchen, nach welchen Faktoren zu suchen. Also das hat das Revenue Management wirklich stark, ich glaube stärker denn je beeinflusst. In strategischer Natur, dass man einfach sehr dahinter sein muss...wo ist was reflektiert, wo findet sich was. Man muss sehr die Preisgestaltung betrachten, eben auch die Preisgestaltung der Competitors. Auch für die Häuser wird es transparenter was die Mitbewerber wo anbieten. Also es ist schon sehr komplex geworden das Thema.

Interviewer

Auf TripAdvisor gibt es ein Tool das heißt ReviewAnalyst wo man sich direkt mit Mitbewerbern vergleichen kann.

Manager D

Ja genau das nutzen wir auch. Also es gibt ja verschiedene Tools. Es gibt sehr vielfältige Seiten wo man eben auch Bewertungen gemacht werden können...fast auf jeder Buchungsplattform können sie ja auch bewerten, das heißt, das ist natürlich alles sehr interessant für uns, aber es wäre natürlich sehr mühsam das alles sich irgendwie per Hand zusammen zu suchen, deswegen benutzen wir auch so ein Tool das uns quasi diese Informationen dann gebündelt gibt und dass wird damit dann arbeiten können.

Interviewer

Und Sie persönlich bekommen auch diese Informationen? Es ist also schon wichtig für Sie zu wissen.

Manager D

Ja. Das ist wieder etwas, das wichtig ist für jeden im Haus zu wissen. Also ich glaub da gibt es eigentlich keine Ausnahme. Also das sind so Dinge die sind nicht speziell. Früher war das vielleicht speziell wichtig für den GM oder den Quality Manager oder so aber mittlerweile ist es wirklich schon so, dass diese Dinge eben weil sie so eine weitreichende Einflussnahme mit sich bringen für wirklich jeden wichtig sind im Haus.

Interviewer

Das heißt Sie kommen dann Tag täglich in Kontakt mit Sozialen Medien, sie nutzen Tools um tägliche Reports zu bekommen.

Manager D

Ja wir bekommen diese Reports und nutzen die dann auch, wir arbeiten damit, wir schauen was sind so die punkte die adressiert werden, was müssen wir besser machen...Natürlich...

Interviewer

In einem Artikel von 2012 wird es als neue Taktik beschrieben, dass man die Möglichkeit hat über die Facebook Seite zu buchen. Also das kann man auf Ihrer Facebook Seite ja auch. Können Sie das evaluieren? Wer also von der Facebook Seite auf Ihre Buchungsseite kommt?

Manager D

Ja also wir können das sicherlich evaluieren. Also ich muss sagen, ich kann ihnen jetzt keine Zahl geben aber das quasi nachzuvollziehen woher die clicks kommen...sagen wir mal auf jeden fall...das ist natürlich möglich.

Interviewer

Und wissen Sie vielleicht seit wann Sie diesen Buchungsbutton auf Facebook haben?

Manager D

Kann ich ihnen jetzt leider nicht sagen. Es ist ja im Prinzip ja eine einfache Verlinkung. Eine weitere Möglichkeit schnell auf unsere Seite zu kommen.

Interviewer

Es besteht auch die Frage ob die Leute die über Soziale Medien buchen ob das ein neues Markt Segment darstellt oder ob man sagt „nein, das sind unsere selben Kunden, die selben Segmente nur die Leute benutzen jetzt diese neue Art der Buchung“.

Manager D

Also ich denke teils-teils. Also dadurch das man versucht auf seine Facebook Seite auch versucht möglichst viele Leute auch einzuladen und verhältnismäßig eine ziemlich große Audienz zu erreichen sind das natürlich teilweise Leute die eben schon Kunde bei uns sind und teilweise Leute die eben interessiert sind an unserem Produkt, an uns als Marke, als Firma. Das heißt, es ist sicherlich sowohl als auch, das heißt die Kunden die schon da sind, sind vielleicht auch ein bisschen vertrauter mit den ganzen Vorgängen. Unsere Kunden sind auch unglaublich versiert was technische Dinge betrifft, also Buchungsmöglichkeiten also quasi Handy, mobile applications und so also das geht ja verhältnismäßig schnell heutzutage dass man sich an irgend so eine Seite oder so gewöhnt hat. Also früher ist das sicherlich ein bisschen schwieriger gewesen so eine Art von Umstellung zu machen. Aber eben umzustellen wie ein Buchungsprozess gemacht wird geht eigentlich verhältnismäßig schnell heutzutage.

Interviewer

Also wenn Sie jetzt als Revenue Manager die Segmente einteilen. Würden Sie dann sagen, dass sie ein neues Segment haben: die online Bucher?

Manager D

Also ich würde sagen eine neue Quelle vielleicht, das sicherlich. Aber es ist kein neues Segment weil natürlich dieses online Segment gibt es jetzt schon eine geraume Zeit. Das heißt, man könnte vielleicht darüber nachdenken jetzt über nächsten Monate, Jahre wäre das sicherlich auch eine Quelle die man sich genauer anschaut weil man dann auch genauer damit arbeiten kann. Im Moment würden wir

es aber unter Online Buchungen aber laufen lassen. Also es ist ja im Prinzip alles Internet quasi.

Interviewer

Ein weiteres Beispiel war das Betriebe verschiedene Kanäle so wie Facebook, Twitter nutzen um noch Last Minute Kunden anzuziehen. Ist das eine Möglichkeit für Sie? Oder ist es nur um die Kunden am laufendend zu halten über das Hotel?

Manager D

Ja also diese Last Minute Geschichte vielleicht nicht unbedingt aber wenn wir Packages oder spezielle Angebote haben dann zirkulieren wir das sehr wohl über Facebook. Also da wird dann mit kurzen Worten das Produkt präsentiert und vorgestellt und dann ein Link dazu platziert dass man das dann auch relativ einfach auch buchen kann.

Interviewer

Das hat ja dann auch einen Code hinterlegt, dass man dann nachvollziehen kann ob das gut ankommt.

Manager D

Ja genau. Also das wird auch genutzt. Bei uns jetzt nicht so bei Last Minute Dingen. Könnte ich mir auch vorstellen aber eigentlich mehr bei speziellen Events oder wenn es auch einfach gerade zum Thema passt, dass heißt wir posten etwas wie Life Ball und dann passt da ein bestimmtes Package was wir vertreiben gut dazu dann ist das natürlich alles stimmig.

Interviewer

Ein anderer Artikel beschreibt wie die Punktegebung zum Beispiel auf Tripadvisor den Preis beeinflussen kann. Da gab es eine Studie von der Cornell Universität, dass wenn man sich auf einer Punktescala um einen Punkt verbessern kann, dass man trotzdem den Preis um 11,2% erhöhen kann ohne Einbußen bei Buchungen. Also, dass die Bewertungen so wichtig sind für die Leute. Glauben Sie das?

Manager D

Ich glaube, dass die Bewertung zum Thema Preis-Leistungsverhältnis schon sehr wichtig ist, ja. Also das heißt, ich kann mir das schon vorstellen, dass eine positive

Bewertung unterstützend für ein stabiles Preisniveau auch ist. Weil eben dieses Thema Preis-Leistung ist eben das große Thema in den ganzen Bewertungen. Das heißt, das ist es auch was die Leute schauen. Sie wollen halt einfach nicht viel Geld ausgeben für die Leistung die Ihnen nicht adäquat erscheint. Und jemand der im fünf Sterne Segment bucht der ist natürlich schon irgendwo gewillt oder darauf vorbereitet, dass das Zimmer nicht nur 80 Euro kostet sondern mehr aber er möchte dann natürlich auch entsprechende Leistung haben. Das heißt er würde sicherlich auch unter allen fünf Sterne Hotels schauen in welchem dieser Häuser, und ich mein bei den Preisen gibt es manchmal große Unterschiede, manchmal nicht so große...aber er würde dann sicherlich schauen wenn er jetzt nicht irgendwie Marken gebunden ist oder so..würde er dann sicherlich schauen, dass er das Beste für sein Geld bekommt.

Interviewer

Und ist es in Ihrer Strategie jetzt sehr wichtig, dass sie versuchen hinaufzuklettern in solchen Bewertungen?

Manager D

Ja sicher. Also ich glaube da ist jedem dran gelegen. Das ist ja quasi Reputation. Das ist Meinungsbildend über das Hotel und auch ultimativ über die Marke und die Kette. Also das ist auf jeden Fall wichtig. Ich glaube nicht, dass es jemanden gibt der das nicht als wichtig empfindet. Man steckt sich dann auch Ziele. Es ist natürlich auch noch immer unheimlich schwierig weil halt diese Bewertungen recht punktuell sind. Das heißt sie bekommen ja nicht von 100% der Gästen die Rückmeldung sondern halt meistens von Gästen die entweder extrem zufrieden oder extrem unzufrieden waren. Da ist es dann sehr leicht quasi einmal in eine bestimmte Richtung abzurutschen. Auch gerade wenn die Anzahl der Bewertungen nicht entsprechend hoch ist.

Interviewer

Ist es sehr schwierig eine schlechte Bewertung zu behandeln?

Manager D

Ich würde mal sagen, man kann schon einiges falsch machen. Wir haben einen Guest Relation Manager der kümmert sich dann um solche Dinge persönlich und das heißt

das ist für uns schon so eine Art Priorität denn alles was sie im Internet veröffentlichen ist öffentlich. Man muss schon ganz genau darauf achten wie man darauf jetzt reagiert oder was man dem entgegenstellt was man liest auch wenn es nicht so schön ist.

7.4 Interview 4

Interviewer

Seit wann sind Sie Revenue Manager?

Manager E

Also ich selbst bin Revenue Manager selbst seit 2007, das ist jetzt doch schon eine Zeit lang. Davor war ich ein Jahr in einem Hotel als Reservierungsleiterin tätig und habe mich aber gleichzeitig auch ums Yield Management gekümmert. Also man kann sagen seit 2006 beschäftige ich mich mit dem Thema.

Interviewer

Es kommt öfter vor, dass man aus der Reservierung dann ins Revenue Management geht.

Manager E

Ja, ein recht typischer Werdegang

Interviewer

Wenn Sie jetzt so zurückblicken, was würden sie sagen hat sich an Ihrer Arbeit in den letzten 5 Jahren verändert?

Manager E

Was sich am meisten getan hat...von den Technologien her...das bezieht sich natürlich auch aufs Revenue Management...jetzt aber generell allein schon wie der Reservierungsablauf stattfindet natürlich. Als ich damals angefangen hab ging noch sehr viel über Fax, was man sich heute fast gar nicht mehr vorstellen kann. Und es ging natürlich viel mehr direkt über die Hotels also wirklich direkte persönliche Anfragen auch über Telefon was natürlich schon zurückgegangen ist und dafür ist natürlich der Anteil an den Webbuchungen stark gestiegen. Da ist natürlich gefragt dass die Hotels und die Marken da wirklich auch on top sind, das ihre Webseiten

auch super funktionieren und das der Buchungsprozess einwandfrei funktioniert und schnell geht. Das ist auf jeden Fall sehr wichtig geworden. War natürlich vorher auch schon wichtig aber wenn jetzt eine Seite nicht funktioniert dann ist der Gast sofort schnell verloren. Der kann über so viele andere Plattformen buchen heutzutage. Das nimmt teilweise schon so ein Ausmaß auch, dass man als Hotel teilweise auch gar nicht mehr selbst weiß auf welchen Plattformen man eigentlich vertreten ist weil es ja nicht alles über direkte Verträge abläuft sondern auch weiterverkauft wird und tausende andere Internetseiten dahinterstecken. Oft weiß man selbst gar nicht dass die existieren.

Interviewer

Das kontrollieren Sie auch oder? Das sie dann öfter testen ob das alles in den richtigen Bahnen läuft.

Manager E

Natürlich. Man kann zwar nicht immer alles abdecken...das ist ganz klar. Es gibt immer wieder Überraschungen...wieder eine neue Seite die man nicht kennt und nicht wusste, dass man dort vertreten ist. Dann denkt man...ok woher bekommen die eigentlich unsere Raten. Da muss man dann schon oft Detektivarbeit leisten. Aber ja man versucht halt so viel wie mögliche von dem ganzen abzudecken und schaut, dass man auch einen Überblick behält über das Ganze.

Interviewer

Ja, das habe ich jetzt schon öfter gehört, dass das ein großes Problem darstellt.

Manager E

Ja, es ist natürlich super für die Kunden weil sie sehr viel vergleichen können. Es gibt Vergleichsportale und alles Mögliche. Ich weiß gar nicht ob es immer so toll ist für die Kunden...teilweise kann es glaub ich schon ein Overflow sein.

Interviewer

Auf Ihrer Homepage gibt es Verlinkungen zu Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest, Tripadvisor und Weibo. Das habe ich bisher noch nicht gesehen, eine Verlinkung zu einer ausschließlich chinesischen Seite. Ich finde das sehr toll, denn der chinesische

Markt ist ja doch ganz anders als der Europäische da es dort kaum Facebook, Twitter, etc gibt sondern die eben ihre eigenen Sozialen Medien haben.

Manager E

Wir haben natürlich eine eigene Person im Haus die sich darum kümmert. Unsere Marketingmanagerin ist auch zuständig für die Social Media Kanäle. Sie macht das nicht alles selbst aber wir arbeiten hier mit externen Agenturen zusammen die diese Kanäle auch betreuen in Zusammenarbeit mit unserer Marketingmanagerin. Also ich weiß natürlich die Standard Social Media Kanäle die jetzt glaub ich mittlerweile auch schon jedes Hotel hat und ein Muss ist. Gewisse andere...warum wir jetzt auch gerade auf dem chinesischen Markt vertreten sind kann ich jetzt nicht sagen. Natürlich darf man den chinesischen Markt nicht außer Acht lassen also das ist ganz klar. Es ist unglaublich wie schnell sich der bewegt..wenn man da dabei ist, ist das natürlich sehr gut. Wie sie vielleicht sehen, hat das jetzt nicht so viel Einfluss auf meine Arbeit.

Interviewer

Ja aber sie werden doch bestimmt des Öfteren über Review Reports sprechen...Meetings wo man über den Einfluss von verschiedenen Kanälen spricht. Außerdem haben sie auch die Möglichkeit, dass man von Facebook aus auf Ihre Buchungsplattform kommt. Wissen Sie ob das gemessen/evaluiert werden kann wie viele Leute über diesen Kanal buchen?

Manager E

Es gibt gewisse Statistiken die wir bekommen. Ich glaube nicht für alle Kanäle. Definitiv für Facebook natürlich und Twitter auf jeden Fall. Die anderen bin ich mir nicht sicher in wie fern diese Statistiken jetzt schon vorhanden sind. Viele von diesen Kanälen sind auch relativ neu..Instagram zum Beispiel. In wie fern es da jetzt genau welche Reportings gibt weiß ich nicht. Facebook gibt es viele natürlich. Bei Twitter auch. Über die Agentur mit der wir arbeiten bekommen wir natürlich auch sehr viele Auswertungen...Welche Postings werden am meisten geliked, von wo kommen die Leute und so weiter. Also da gibt es schon einiges. Ob man das dann als Buchungsverhalten dann ummünzen kann is dann schon etwas schwierig zu sagen aber das ist wieder etwas komplett anderes. Deshalb, natürlich sind die Informationen für mich schon wertvoll...das ist generell für die Sales- und

Marketingabteilung und für mich natürlich schon auch interessant zu wissen. Ob es jetzt wirklich großen Einfluss auf die Buchungen hat ist etwas anderes.

Interviewer

Wenn man jetzt so Kommentare liest, kann man ja doch den Gast sehr viel besser kennenlernen. Falls man bemerkt, die Leute wünschen oder kritisieren oft dasselbe könnte man dies als Add-Ons anbieten. Mit diesem Wissen kann man doch einiges tun. Auch mit dem eigenen Tool ReviewAnalyst von TripAdvisor kann man sich sehr gut mit anderen Vergleichen, aber natürlich wenn sie eine außenstehende Firma haben, die sich darum kümmert werden Sie das vermutlich nicht nutzen?

Manager E

Ja also direkt hier im Haus nicht aber das Headoffice. Gerade so große Kanäle wie TripAdvisor da werden oft Global Agreements getroffen für alle Hotels und die machen dann oft diese Auswertungen selbst und wir bekommen dann schon teilweise die Reports aber wir müssen das nicht immer alles selbst machen.

Interviewer

Setzt man sich dann so Ziele um sich auf TripAdvisor um einige Punkte oder Plätze zu verbessern? Es gibt da eine Arbeit von jemand an der Cornell Universität der herausgefunden hat, dass wenn man sich um einen Punkt also zum Beispiel von 3,2 auf 4,2 verbessert kann man die Preise um 11,2% erhöhen ohne einen Rückgang an Buchungen, weil eben diese Bewertungen so wichtig und ausschlaggebend für den Gast in seiner Buchungsentscheidung ist.

Manager E

Als Revenue Manager würde ich mich jetzt nicht trauen um 11% meine Preise zu steigern wenn ich einen Punkt oder Platz auf Tripadvisor gut mache. Ich glaube 11% ist relativ viel. Gerade in so einem Preissensiblen Markt wie Wien ist glaube ich sehr gefährlich. Das ist auch relativ schwierig wenn man auf Platz 10 war und jetzt Platz 5 kann man nicht einfach sagen ich hebe meine Preise an. Man kann sich wahrscheinlich immer ein bisschen teurere Preise erlauben wenn man in den Top 10 oder 15 ist. Je nach dem natürlich auch in welcher Destination, kommt auch auf die Anzahl der Hotels drauf an aber mit der Aussage würde ich als Revenue Manager

etwas vorsichtig umgehen und das jetzt nicht unbedingt als Recommendation weitergeben. In Paris ist es sicher leichter das zu machen als in Wien.

Interviewer

Es ist auch die Frage ob die Leute die viele Reviews lesen, sich damit beschäftigen, viel posten also Social Media Nutzer ob das ein neues Kundensegment sein könnte oder ob das einfach dieselben Gäste sind wie früher nur dass sie sich jetzt mehr damit auseinandersetzen.

Manager E

Das ist eine sehr gute Frage, aber ich habe leider keine passende Antwort darauf muss ich sagen. Das ist etwas was ich selbst gerne wissen würde aber ich glaube es ist teils teils. Es ist schwierig zu sagen. Ist es eine neue Kundschaft? Jein. Natürlich es gab die Kundschaft nicht wirklich so in dem Sinne weil es einfach die Sozialen Medien nicht gab. Sind sie jetzt deswegen eine neue Kundschaft weil es Facebook gibt...nicht unbedingt. Sie wären wahrscheinlich auch über andere Kanäle auf das Hotel aufmerksam geworden. Es ist vielleicht wirklich ein kleiner Prozentsatz der wirklich so Social Media affin ist und in dem Sinne unser Hotel verfolgt das sie dadurch draufkommen bei uns zu buchen aber ich glaube wenn man das auf das ganze Hotel umrechnet ist das wirklich ein sehr kleiner Prozentsatz. Also das sind vielleicht vereinzelt Buchungen die mal so darüber zustande kommen aber auch nicht so viele glaube ich.

Interviewer

Also diese Daten die Sie bekommen...würden Sie sagen Sie verwenden diese? Also sehen sie sich an was auf Facebook etc passiert und lassen das in Ihre Forecast Entscheidung mit einfließen?

Manager E

Nein

Interviewer

Es gibt auch ein Beispiel, dass man Last Minute Angebote über Soziale Medien (Facebook, Twitter,etc) verbreitet. Denken Sie das ist eine mögliche Strategie oder

sind Soziale Medien nur um das Hotel zu präsentieren und auf sich aufmerksam zu machen?

Manager E

Es ist natürlich schon eine Plattform die sehr allgemein ist. Eben auch so wie sie sagen um eher das Produkt darzustellen als jetzt konkrete Angebote. Wir verwenden es aber schon auch um neue Angebote zum Beispiel hervorzuheben. Aber das sind dann nicht Angebote die speziell auf Facebook Kunden zugeschnitten sind sondern eben generelle neue Angebote, Neuigkeiten, was halt im Hotel neues passiert oder was man Neues buchen kann oder wenn es ein neues Package gibt, eine neues Angebot gibt, ein Angebot was gerade passend ist für Valentinstag oder ein spezielles Event ist wo es dazu passen könnte..wo man das miteinander verbinden kann. Wenn es im Spa Muttertagsspecials gibt oder solche Sachen. Oder wenn sich im Restaurant was tut dann ja...dann wird das schon auch dafür verwendet um Angebote darzustellen aber wie gesagt jetzt eher generell Dinge die man auch über andere Kanäle buchen kann aber jetzt nichts spezifisches nur über Facebook gebucht werden.

Interviewer

Wie denken Sie wird sich das weiterentwickeln? Gerade im Bezug auf Revenue Management denken Sie, dass es vielleicht mal so weit sein wird, dass Sie die Daten von Sozialen Medien noch wichtiger werden und sie diese in Ihre Entscheidungen einbauen werden. Oder denken Sie das es so bleibt, ein Informationskanal?

Manager E

Es bleibt auf jeden Fall spannend weil sich sicher sehr viel tun wird von dem wir heute noch absolut keine Ahnung haben, dass es so passieren wird, eigentlich sogar in absehbarer Zeit passieren wird. Revenue Management selbst ist eigentlich noch recht jung also im Vergleich zu anderen Abteilungen im Hotel ist Revenue Management doch auch noch ziemlich neu. Auch wenn es für uns jetzt schon wieder was Alltägliches ist und es eigentlich schon in allen großen Ketten gibt. Bei Social Media...ich weiß es nicht...ich glaube irgendwann wird der Hype sich ein bremsen müssen. Auch wenn es immer Neuigkeiten geben wird und wieder neue Dinge dazukommen werden aber ich glaub nicht dass es so...also ich glaub nicht, dass es ein Buchungskanal werden wird. Ich weiß es natürlich nicht aber ich glaube nicht

dass es so einen großen Einfluss aufs Buchungsverhalten haben wird. Ich glaube es ist definitiv wichtig dass alle Hotels das nutzen aber mehr zu Marketing/ Image Zwecken als wirklich Reservierungsplattform.

7.5 Interview 5

Interviewer

Sie sind ja schon bereits seit 1996 im Revenue Management Bereich tätig.

Manager F

Ja genau. Also ich war eigentlich von Anfang an dabei.

Interviewer

Wenn Sie jetzt zurückblicken was hat sich so verändert? Was waren die größten Veränderungen? In den letzten fünf Jahren hat sich ja auch einiges getan im Bezug auf Internet, neue Technologien, Soziale Medien..

Manager F

Eine ganz massive Veränderung waren die OTAs weil natürlich...mittlerweile ist es so mit den OTAs so quasi „die Geister die ich rief“ weil die waren plötzlich da und es war ganz leicht für die Hotels ihre Zimmer zu verkaufen und die haben dann halt beim Marketing gespart, Sales gespart und haben sich gedacht das brauchen wir ja jetzt alles nicht mehr. Aber mittlerweile sind die OTAs so stark geworden, dass die Hotels komplett abhängig sind und natürlich massive Kommissionszahlungen haben. Das war eine riesengroße Veränderung und ich glaube das haben die Hotels ein bisschen unterschätzt. Und Soziale Medien natürlich auch. Das ist für viele noch immer ein neueres Phänomen aber ich glaube es ist ganz, ganz wichtig, dass man das aktiv nutzt als Hotel. Es ist jetzt nicht mehr ganz neu aber ich glaube viele Hotels haben noch Probleme diesen Marketing Kanal eigentlich wirklich gut zu nutzen.

Interviewer

Ist das auch ein Thema was Ihnen in Ihrer Arbeit unterkommt?

Manager F

Absolut. Es hängt ja alles zusammen weil der Preis ist ja abhängig von...also der Preis den man verkaufen kann...also Revenue Management ist ja quasi...das ganze Thema

Dynamic Pricing, also die Steuerung der Preise nach Angebot und Nachfrage und der Preis den man verkaufen kann ist ganz, ganz stark abhängig von der Positionierung des Hotels. Und Positionierung des Hotels heißt auch welches Image transportiert dieses Hotel nach außen. Die Wege wie man Image nach außen transportieren kann haben sich massiv verändert durch Social Media. Und jeder der Social Media nicht aktiv nutzt der verliert einfach ganz, ganz viel Marktpräsenz. Ich finde gerade für Luxushotellerie ist Social Media ganz, ganz wichtig weil die Luxushotellerie spricht traditionell eher ein älteres Klientel an und mit Social Media...das ist einfach eine tolle Möglichkeit um auch ein jüngeres Publikum oder die Generation Y aktiv anzusprechen was natürlich auch ganz, ganz wichtig ist weil sonst sterben die Gäste ja weg...es müssen ja irgendwie neue Gäste nachkommen. So schlimm das jetzt klingt aber das ist eben so. Deswegen ist der Kanal auch so wichtig.

Interviewer

Arbeiten Sie auch mit Daten von Sozialen Medien also zum Beispiel Auswertungen von verschiedenen Portalen, verschiedene Kommentare?

Manager F

Ja, unbedingt. Das ist ganz, ganz wichtig weil das ist wirklich ungefiltertes Gästefeedback. Das muss man auch ernst nehmen. Es ist normalerweise auch so, dass man ein wöchentliches Meeting hat, also das Revenuemeeting wo dann diese Sachen auch aktiv einfließen. Es geht dann eben um Onlinebewertungen, die extrem wichtig sind in der Hotellerie und auch um die ganzen Daten und Fakten über Social Media. Also alles was man...dies ganze Intelligence die man über Social Media dann hat über die Kunden. Und es muss auch jemand das aktiv pflegen klarerweise. Wenn jetzt ein negativer Beitrag kommt dann muss da sofort aktiv werden.

Interviewer

Da gibt es heutzutage schon oft eigene Positionen die nur für Soziale Medien zuständig sind.

Ich habe natürlich einiges gelesen was man jetzt tun kann in Bezug auf Nutzung von Sozialen Medien für Revenue Management und es war nicht immer ganz klar war ob man das jetzt wirklich nur auf Revenue Management beziehen kann. Da wurde dann auch ein Beispiel beschrieben über Push Strategien die man über Soziale Medien

anwenden kann. (Mountain Resort mit günstigen Preisen für kurze Zeit). Man wollte die Betten füllen und auf sich aufmerksam machen. Solche Strategien sind für die meisten kein Option. Es ist eben eher so...Soziale Medien fürs Image aber nicht für den Verkauf.

Manager F

Nein, also das finde ich jetzt auch extrem...vor allem diese niedrigen Preise für eine Suite. Würde ich überhaupt nicht machen, weil das ja auch das Produkt in einer Weise total abwertet. Also wenn das jetzt jemand hört das kostet nur 42 und der hat aber letztes mal 4000 bezahlt...der denkt sich er wurde über den Tisch gezogen. Also ich finde, das hat dann auch keine Relation mehr. Und natürlich die Gäste, die man damit anspricht kommen halt einmal und nie wieder, das ist auch klar. Niemand würde dann...auch von den Leuten die sich angesprochen fühlen würde niemand den Normalpreis zahlen. Das ist vielleicht eine Strategie um den Bekanntheitsgrad zu steigern aber ich glaube nicht, dass man damit das Zielpublikum anspricht von diesem Hotel. Nein, das würde ich nicht machen.

Interviewer

In der Arbeit von 2012 war es noch ganz neu, dass man auf Facebook eine Verlinkung hat die einem auf die Hoteleigene Buchungsseite bringt. Jetzt kann man feststellen, dass das schon die meisten Hotels übernommen haben. Was denken Sie darüber?

Manager F

Also man sollte alles versuchen um die Gäste auf die eigene Webseite zu bekommen. Also man sollte wirklich alles tun damit ein Gast nicht über irgendeinen OTA bucht sondern direkt im Hotel. Und ich glaube schon wenn ein Link da ist dann geht man schneller mal auf den Link und bucht vielleicht. Der Link sollte überall drauf sein wo es geht. Ich finde es wichtig, dass das gemacht wird.

Interviewer

Dass es wichtig ist TripAdvisor und sonstige Reviews zu lesen um Gäste und deren Wünsche besser kennen zu lernen haben wir schon ein bisschen gesprochen, dass das wichtig ist.

Manager F

Das ist ganz essentiell also Reputation Management ist ganz essentiell und es gibt mittlerweile Studien, dass..ich glaub 80% der Gäste die ein Hotel buchen schauen sich vorher die Bewertungen an. Ja die Bewertungen sind leidergottes aber mittlerweile das allerwichtigste geworden. Und die Bewertungen sind auch ausschlaggebend dafür welche Preise man verlangen kann. Weil wenn ein Hotel gute Bewertungen hat, kann man mit den Preisen rauf gehen, das ist so. Also insofern ist das für Revenue Management ganz, ganz wichtig. Und es hängt alles zusammen.

Interviewer

Das was Sie gerade erwähnt haben führt mich zu einer weiteren Arbeit von Herrn Anderson an der Cornell Universität. Er schreibt, dass man wenn man sich um einen Punkt verbessert (von 3,3 auf 4,3) dass man seine Preise um 11,2% steigern kann ohne Buchungseinbußen zu haben.

Manager F

Das unterschreibe ich zu 100%. Ja, absolut. Das ist mittlerweile wirklich das allerwichtigste weil die ganzen Marketinganzeigen, das glaubt einfach keiner mehr. Also die Leute wollen halt Feedback von anderen Travellern. Es ist zum Teil natürlich auch alles schon ein wenig manipuliert aber ja die Gäste richten sich noch immer danach. Mal sehen wie lange das hält noch aber Bewertungen sind essentiell.

Interviewer

Wenn Sie jetzt Kunden beraten ist es so, dass die Ihre Reviews verfolgen wie zum Beispiel über das Tool von TripAdvisor (ReviewAnalyst)? Raten Sie dazu, dass es gemacht gehört oder wird es schon gemacht?

Manager F

Naja, zum Teil wird es schon gemacht. Was wichtig ist, ist das man sich das wirklich regelmäßig anschaut also das ist eins der wichtigsten Dinge die man machen muss. Mindestens einmal pro Woche sich das anzuschauen. Am besten wäre es natürlich man hat ein Tool, das alle Bewertungsportale zusammenfasst und wo man dann wirklich täglich die ganzen neuen Bewertungen sieht und dann auch sofort reagieren kann wenn das eine negative Bewertung ist.

Interviewer

Also das ist ein Investment das sie jedem raten würden?

Manager F

Absolut. Weil wenn es negative Bewertungen gibt muss man sofort reagieren. Das ist ganz wichtig. Weil man sieht es auch bei Bewertungen, dass gerade die negativen Kommentare am meisten angeklickt werden. Was natürlich unfair ist. Dann ist es natürlich wichtig dass man gleich zurückschreibt, und das versucht zu entkräften.

Interviewer

Eine Frage, die auch immer wieder auftaucht ist ob SM Nutzer ein neues Marktsegment darstellen oder ist es ein alternativer Weg der Kommunikation von bereits existierenden Segmenten?

Manager F

Interessante Frage. Also ich glaube...also wenn wir jetzt von online Reviews sprechen also das ist schon die bestehende Zielgruppe die man immer hatte. Also das heißt die ganzen Bewertungen auf booking.com usw. Aber wenn man jetzt rein von Social Media spricht dann glaub ich schon, dass man da auch eine jüngere Zielgruppe ansprechen kann dadurch. Wenn man jetzt auf Social Media nicht aktiv ist glaube ich schon, dass man einfach eine bestimmte Zielgruppe ausklammert. Weil die Generation Y die lebt mit Social Media. Für die ist das einfach normal und das ist einfach die Art wie diese Generation kommuniziert und da gibt es keinen Weg daran vorbei.

Interviewer

Können Sie sich vorstellen wie sich das in Zukunft weiterentwickelt? Eine Meinung ist, dass Soziale Medien schon sehr wichtig bleiben, aber dass man hofft, dass es sich etwas verbessert. Das wenn Leute Reviews lesen sie auch schon besser zwischen Fake und wahr unterscheiden können und nicht nur das Hotel ablehnen weil es eine negative Kritik gab.

Manager F

Ja also ich glaube schon dass das bleiben wird weil die Leute wollen einfach den Erfahrungsaustausch. Wie sich das ganze entwickeln wird...ich glaube es werden immer wieder neue Portale auch aus dem Boden schießen. Ich denke das Facebook

weniger Macht haben wird in Zukunft und das dafür einfach andere Portale einfach kommen werden. Ich denke, dass bestimmte Foren noch wichtiger werden als bisher, das heißt wirklich solche Foren wo sich die gleiche Zielgruppe austauscht..zum Beispiel Kulturinteressierte oder Abenteuerurlauber. Also ich glaube, dass das auch noch viel mehr werden wird. Eher mehr Zielgruppenspezifisch oder mehr nach special interest groups oder sowas. Der Grund warum ich glaube, dass Facebook zum Beispiel immer weniger wichtig wird das ist weil die Portale die halt schon sehr populär sind da wird man natürlich mittlerweile auch schon mit Werbung überhäuft. Und ich glaube eben auch, dass das dann eben viele Leute auch nervt irgendwann. Das ist eben die down-side. Sobald irgendeine Seite groß wird dann gibt es Big business und jeder will mitschneiden. Dann geht der Sinn auch oft verloren. Aber der Austausch wird über Soziale Netzwerke erfolgen, da bin ich überzeugt. Ich glaube auch das dadurch, klassisches Marketing einfach immer unwichtiger wird weil die Leute glauben nicht mehr an diese Hochglanz Anzeigen sondern die wollen einfach einen Erfahrungsaustausch von Gleichgesinnten. Das wird auf jeden Fall so weitergehen.

Interviewer

Weil Sie gerade das klassische erwähnt haben. Alle interviewten Hotels decken die klassischen Sozialen Netzwerke ab aber nur Sofitel hat auch eine Chinesische Plattform im Programm. Der chinesische Markt hat ja nicht dieselben sozialen Netzwerke wie wir sondern seine eigenen. Das ist doch eigentlich noch nicht sehr fortschrittlich da der chinesische Markt besonders für Wien sehr wichtig ist. Was denken Sie darüber?

Manager F

Ja also man muss absolut am Puls bleiben. Man kann sich nie zurücklehnen und ausruhen sondern das wird sich immer verändern...permanent. Permanente Veränderung ist sowieso das neue normal. Man muss es dann wahrscheinlich auch auf die geographischen Gruppen anpassen. Weil im arabischen Raum gibt es andere Plattformen wie in China.