

Social media strategy – Paleis Hotel

How can the Paleis Hotel attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy?



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Executive summary

Over the last decade, social media platforms have transformed the hotel industry. Companies such as Facebook and Tripadvisor have changed how hotels attract and communicate with (potential) customers. The Paleis Hotel is a boutique hotel with 20 rooms situated in the city centre of The Hague. Currently, the hotel is not very active on social media. The current owner of the Paleis Hotel, Marja Hillebrand, wants her business to profit from the new opportunities that social media platforms offer.

The purpose of this report is to create a social media strategy for the Paleis Hotel. The central question of the report is: ‘How can the Paleis Hotel attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy?’. Firstly, the objectives of having a social media strategy were examined and the current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel was investigated. Consequently, a SWOT-analysis about the social media capacities of the hotel was administered. In addition, target groups were identified and chosen and the behaviour of direct competitors of the Paleis Hotel were inspected. Lastly, a social media content plan was drafted for the Paleis Hotel to function as the guideline for their social media strategy.

The preliminary research showed that the Paleis Hotel shares fewer messages on social media than its competitors. Furthermore, it appeared that the social media users tend to prefer informative messages rather than commercial messages. The most important aspect of the mission and vision of the Paleis Hotel is to deliver a perfect customer service. The owner of the hotel requested that a social media strategy should be in the interest of customers instead of being profit-driven. Concerning domestic tourism, target groups were chosen using data of the municipality of The Hague. These groups are adventurous adults, sophisticated elderly and creative and inspiring adults because they are likely to choose the location of the hotel and the services that the Paleis Hotel has to offer. Regarding international tourism, the focus should be on tourists from Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom since these are the biggest market segments with the highest growth potentials.

The main recommendation for the Paleis Hotel is to implement the social media content plan that was created in this report using data and advice from an online marketer. Research showed that the hotel should use Facebook as its main social media platform. Facebook is the most popular social media for the target groups of the Paleis Hotel and it offers numerous possibilities to attract and communicate with customers. On the review site Tripadvisor, the Paleis Hotel is advised to continue to stimulate customers to write reviews and react on these comments in a positive manner. Finally, it is recommended that the hotel should not send out commercial messages because social media users do generally not appreciate this and it is not compatible with the hotel’s mission and vision.

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Preface

The Paleis Hotel is a hotel situated in the historic Noordeinde neighbourhood of The Hague. It is a small hotel with 20 rooms. The Paleis Hotel can be defined as a boutique hotel, which is a small, non-branded and stylish hotel with upscale accommodations. The Paleis Hotel is located in a monumental building, which dates back from the 17th century. The famous writer Louis Couperus used to stay in this building when his sister lived there at the end of the 19th century. Thanks to its unique location, luxurious character and extraordinary customer service, the Paleis Hotel regularly receives prominent guests from all over the world.

The hotel is run by Marja Hillebrand since 2014. The owner has been working for several hotel chains in the past. She is very passionate about hospitality. Together with her employees, she aims to deliver a perfect customer service. The hotel has a small, young and solid team of employees, consisting of 11 staff members.

Prices range from €95,- till €125,- per night for a standard room and €135,- till €165,- per night for a suite. The hotel does not have a restaurant but it does have a breakfast room where a luxurious breakfast is offered for €18,50 per person per day.



Introduction

Social media have become indispensable in the lives of millions of people around the world. Social media platforms have developed into a powerful tool to reach and communicate with customers. Therefore, companies and organisations may choose to create a strategy for their activities on these social media platforms. The objective of this report is to create a social media strategy for the Paleis Hotel, which is a hotel with 20 rooms in the city centre of The Hague.

The central research question of this report is: ‘How can the Paleis Hotel attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy?’. The following sub questions are covered to answer the central research question:

- What are the objectives of creating a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel?
- What is the current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel?
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the Paleis Hotel?
- What should be the target group(s) of the Paleis Hotel when implementing a social media strategy?
- How are competitors using social media?
- What would be an effective content plan for the Paleis Hotel?

Firstly, the owner of the Paleis Hotel was interviewed. The purpose of this interview was to gain knowledge about the objectives of having a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel and the company’s mission and vision. It is essential to know the owner’s objectives of creating a social media strategy to determine what the strategy should be focused on. In addition, it is vital to understand the mission and vision of a company before a compatible strategy can be created. Furthermore, the current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel was examined. It is necessary to understand the current situation of the hotel to enhance improvement. A SWOT-analysis was included in this report to gain insight into the hotel’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is important to know the assets a company has and the potential threats that exist. Otherwise, a strategy might be created that the Paleis Hotel cannot implement because it is not capable enough.

Moreover, it is vital to determine target groups when creating a social media strategy. The main advantage of having target groups is to know on which group of people there needs to be a focus. It is practically impossible to reach every customer. Therefore, it is wise to focus on a few market segments. It is also useful to investigate the activities of competitors on social media. Acquired information can serve as a source of inspiration for the social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel. In addition, it can indicate opportunities on social media for the hotel that competitors have not taken yet. Lastly, a social media content plan was created for the Paleis Hotel to implement. This plan displays

when the Paleis Hotel should engage on social media and what the content of its messages should be, in line with the hotel's mission and vision.

The report starts with a preface before the introduction, which briefly gives background information on the Paleis Hotel. A theoretical framework is included to provide relevant theories. In the methodology, the application of these theories on the results is explained. The findings generated by research are discussed in the results part of this report. These results are analysed in the analysis chapter. The report ends with a conclusion and recommendations.

1. Theoretical framework

The main subjects of this chapter are social media, strategy, marketing and theories related to social media marketing. These four topics are very relevant to the central research question of this report.

A social media strategy is executed by the use of social media. Furthermore, it is important to understand the concept of strategy. The creation of a social media strategy is closely correlated to marketing. Published theories related to marketing and social media marketing are, therefore, essential to take into account.

1.1 Social media

According to Safko & Brake (2009) social media refers to activities, practices and behaviours among communities of people who go online to gather information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. In this case, conversational media are Web-based applications that permit users to create and transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos and audios.

1.1.1 Social media applications

In their essay *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media* Kaplan & Haenlein created a classification of social media. In this report, this classification is used to label different social media networks.

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Figure 1.1: Classification of social media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure

Collaborative projects permit many users to create content. It is the most democratic form of social media. The principal idea of collaborative projects is that the efforts of many users allow the outcome to be of high quality. A great example of a collaborative project is Wikipedia, a free online encyclopaedia. On the other hand, a blog is usually managed by one person and has a more subjective output. However, it does provide the possibility of interaction with other users.

In content communities, users share content with each other. The shared content can be very diverse; photos, videos and texts for instance. A personal profile page is usually not obligatory to use content communities. If it is required, these pages only contain basic information in most cases. On the contrary, social networking sites are far more personal. These applications enable users to create personal information pages and connect with other users. Personal information can be shared in different formats, including photos, videos, audio files and blogs. Companies can use social networking sites for marketing research or to construct a brand community. In this report, the focus is on primarily social networking sites. These sites have the greatest potential benefit for companies because personal customisation of pages and profiles is important when a company wants to reflect its brand (Fridolf & Arnautovic, 2011).

Virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds are not relevant in this report since they focus mostly on individual use and do not offer space for companies to express themselves. Virtual worlds are platforms that imitate a real-world environment that permits users to interact with each other as they would in real life.

1.2 Strategy

The book *Fundamentals of Strategy* by Johnson, Whittington & Scholes (2012) is used in this report to define strategy and its basic components. The definition of strategy, levels of strategy and strategy statements are covered below.

1.2.1 The definition of strategy

A strategy is a long-term direction of an organisation. The three elements of this strategy are the long-term, direction and organisation. These concepts can be further explored.

Strategies are typically measured over years. The three horizons framework (figure 1.2) states that every organisation should think of itself as having three types of activities, defined by horizons in terms of years. Horizon 1 is considered as the core activities of a company. Horizon 2 means emerging activities that should provide a new source of profit, such as social media strategy. Horizon 3 can consist of risky Research & Development projects on a longer term.

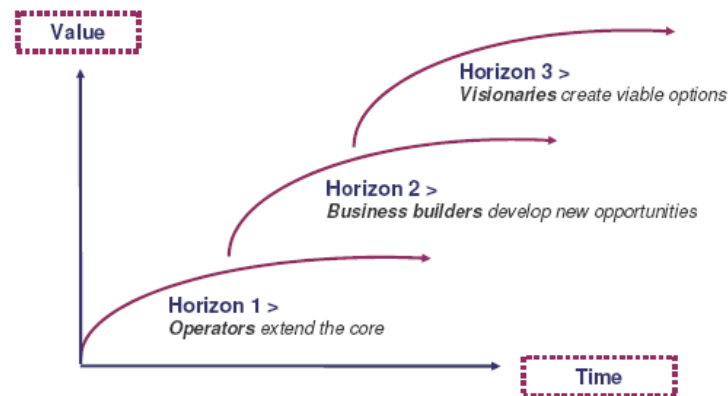


Figure 1.2: Three horizons for strategy

Typically, strategies have some type of long-term direction. A strategic direction may only emerge as a coherent pattern over time. However, most companies try to set the direction of their strategy in line with long-term objectives.

Most companies have many internal and external stakeholders. Internally, organisations are filled with employees, who are usually diverse and competing. Externally, important relations, such as customers and suppliers, surround organisations. Therefore, it is relevant to consider the inside of organisations and their external boundaries when creating a strategy.

1.2.2 Levels of strategy

Strategies exist at three levels: corporate level, business level and operational level. The corporate level strategy is concerned with the overall scope of an organisation. The diversity of products and services, acquisitions of new businesses and the geographical scope of operations are components of the corporate level strategy. Moreover, business level strategy is about how individual businesses should compete in their particular markets. It concerns issues such as innovation, appropriate scale and the reaction to competitors' moves. Lastly, operational strategies are concerned with the implementation of the corporate and business level strategies. The creation of a social media strategy can be considered as an operational strategy because it helps the other two strategies to function properly.

1.2.3 Strategy statement

David Collis and Michael Rukstad at the Harvard Business School (2008) argue that all entrepreneurs should be able to put their company's strategy into a strategy statement. It should have three main themes; the mission, vision and objectives, the scope of the activities and advantages a company has or capabilities it needs to deliver the objectives.

The mission is related to goals and reflects the purpose of an organisation. The mission statement helps to stay focused on the company's strategy. Furthermore, the vision also relates to the goals but is more of an aspiration in the future. It can help to mobilise the energy and passion of the internal stakeholders of a company. Objectives are more precise statements of the organisation's goals over a certain period of time. Their term is shorter than the vision. The scope of an organisation refers to three dimensions: customers and clients, geographical location and the extent of internal activities. The advantage-part of a strategy statement describes how the organisation will achieve the objectives it has set for itself. In competitive environments, this refers to the competitive advantage. According to Collis and Rukstad, strategy statements should not be longer than 35 words to keep it focused on the essentials and make it easy to remember.

1.3 Marketing

This part of the theoretical framework describes the principles of marketing. The creation of an effective social media strategy is closely related to marketing. The marketing theory from the book *Principles of Marketing* by Kotler & Armstrong (2015) is used in this report.

According to Kotler & Armstrong, the definition of marketing is:

'Marketing is managing profitable customer relationships. The twofold goal of marketing is to attract new customers by promising superior value and keep and grow current customers by delivering satisfaction.'

In the recent years, new marketing approaches have been introduced, such as websites and social networks. These new approaches allow businesses to reach customers directly and personally. The subjects marketing communications mix, market segmentation / market targeting, SWOT analysis, defining competitors and online marketing are covered below because they are relevant to answer the central research question and sub questions of this report.

1.3.1 Marketing communications mix

A company's marketing communications mix (figure 1.3) is a combination of advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion and direct marketing tools that can be used to communicate customer value and build customer relationships. Each category involves specific promotional tools to communicate with customers. In addition, marketing communication also includes the product's design, price, shape and colour of its package. The marketing communications mix is the company's primary communications activity. Therefore, all its components need to be coordinated. A social media strategy has to fit with the whole marketing communication mix to work effectively.



Figure 1.3: The marketing communications mix

1.3.2 Market segmentation / Market targeting

Market segmentation is the division of a market into smaller segments with distinct needs, characteristics, or behavior that might require separate marketing strategies or mixes (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015). There are several ways to segment a market. Segmentation variables, such as geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral variables, can create the best market structure. Kotler and Armstrong suggest not to limit a market segmentation analysis to only one or a few variables. They advise to use multiple segmentation bases to identify better-defined target groups. Market segments must be measurable, accessible, substantial, differentiable and actionable to be useful.

Companies must decide which segment(s) they want to target after they have evaluated different segments. A chosen segment will then become a target market. When a company wants to focus on the market as a whole instead of segments, it should use undifferentiated marketing. If a company decides to target several market segments and focus on them individually with different strategies, it is called differentiated marketing. Furthermore, a company can choose to use concentrated marketing and focus on a large share of one or a few smaller segments or niches. Micromarketing is the most precise form of targeting. It is the practice of tailoring products and marketing programs to suit the tastes of individual needs. This can be divided into local marketing and individual marketing, which specifies on location or individual customers.

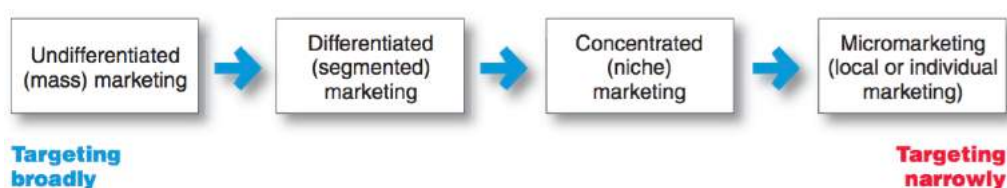


Figure 1.4: Market targeting strategies

1.3.3 SWOT analysis

A company should focus on identifying its management when it wants to be successful at marketing management. An analysis of the company's situation is the beginning of managing the marketing function. A SWOT analysis evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of a company. Strengths are the internal capabilities that may help a company reach its objectives. Internal limitations that may interfere with a company's ability to achieve its objective are considered weaknesses. Opportunities are external factors that, when used, can help a company in achieving its objectives. On the other hand, threats are current and emerging external problems that can withhold a company from carrying out its objectives. The intention of a SWOT analysis is to match a company's strengths and opportunities, and eliminate or overcome the weaknesses and minimize the threats.

1.3.4 Defining competitors

The proper implementation of effective marketing strategy cannot be achieved without knowledge of a company's competitors. A company has to constantly compare its marketing strategies, prices, products channels, and promotions. Companies can identify their competitors from an industry point of view by looking at which industry they are in or from a market point of view by looking at the customers that are being targeted.

After their identification, a company has to assess its competitors. In most industries, companies have the same sort of strategy. A company can choose to assess them by this. The strengths and weaknesses of competitors can also be interesting to define. A company can benchmark itself against competitors, which means comparing their products or services. Comparing one's product or service with a competitor can be used to identify the best practices and find ways to improve quality and performance. Most companies prefer to compete against weak competitors. A customer value analysis is a useful tool to determine strengths and weaknesses of competitors. Close competitors are the main rivalry for a majority of companies. However, companies may avoid 'destroying' a close competitor to prevent another competitor from getting stronger. A company can also choose to target unoccupied positions in uncontested market spaces where there are no competitors.

1.3.5 Online marketing

Online marketing is the fastest-growing form of direct marketing and uses the Internet to generate profit. Click-only companies are companies whose presence is only online while click-and-mortar companies use the Internet merely as an extra sales or communication channel. Thanks to the Internet, consumers and companies can communicate much more easily. They can ask questions, file complaints and write reviews on sites such as Tripadvisor for the hospitality industry.

1.4 Theories related to social media marketing

Social media are often seen by companies as tools to reach a certain goal. Social media is supposed to lead to a desired result. Therefore, most of the published theories about social media are focused on how to plan a strategy and engage with the target audience. These theories are usually presented in models. Two of most well known models are mentioned in this theoretical framework, namely the 3-M-framework and the honeycomb of social media. Lastly, theory about community creating through social media is explained.

1.4.1 The 3-M-framework

According to Gallagher & Ransbotham (2010), interaction between consumers and companies on social media can be conceptualised as a framework with three components, which are megaphone, magnet and the monitor (see figure 1.5). Arrows indicate the direction of the information flow and solid lines define the relationships. Dotted lines signify potential relationships.

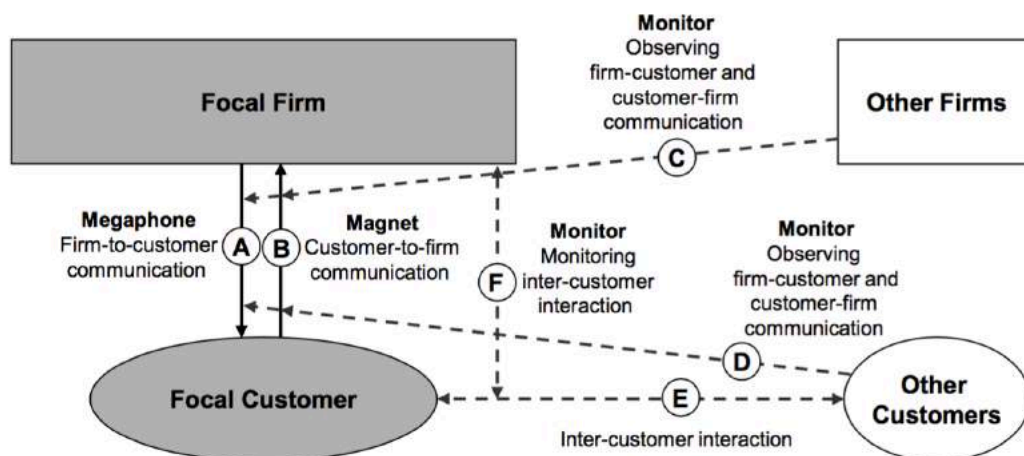


Figure 1.5: The 3-M-framework

Organisations can use social media to share their message with the world. Since this message is public, it is called megaphone. It can be utilised for brand positioning, distributing time-sensitive information, promoting content and recruiting customers. Magnet is communication the other way around, from customers to an organisation. To leverage the inbound conversation, companies need to have a recognizable social media presence. Companies can capture feedback from customers, enhance market research and improve customer service and innovation through this inbound conversation. Communication with customers can be used to correct inaccuracies, praise efforts and encourage activities and promotion. Monitor means that companies look at the inter-customer dialog to gain customer insight and market intelligence.

1.4.2 The honeycomb of social media

The honeycomb of social media is a framework of seven social media building blocks invented by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011). These blocks can be used individually or together and help to make sense of the social media ecology and to understand the target audience and their needs. There are two honeycombs; one shows the specific facets of social media user experience and the other displays the implications for firms.

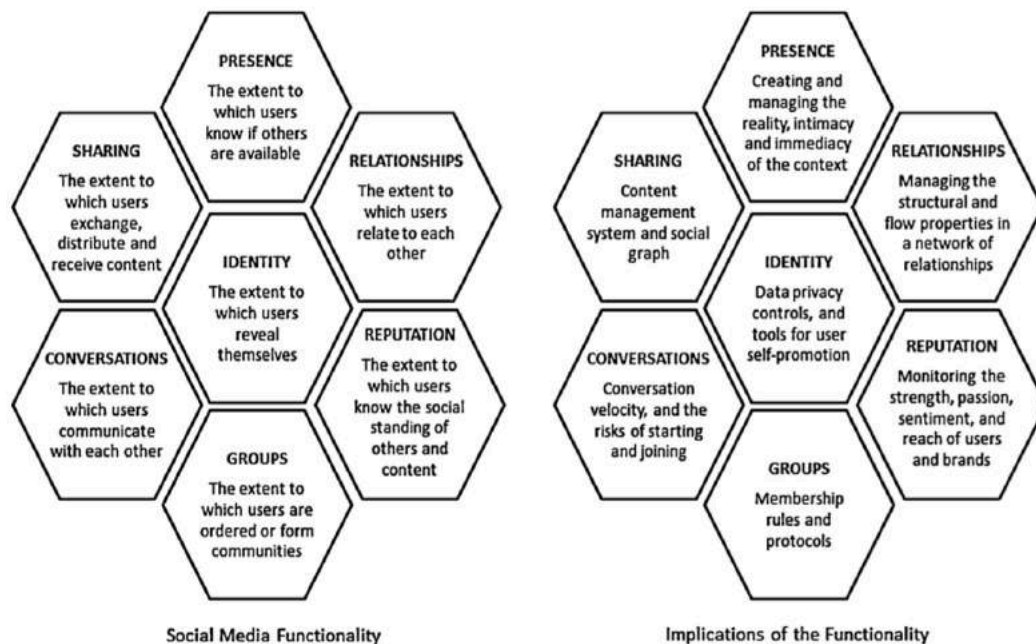


Figure 1.6: The honeycomb of social media

The identity block signifies the extent to which social media users reveal their identities such as age, gender and profession. Companies can use this aspect to promote their own identity but should, at the same time, be careful not to share too much regarding their privacy. The conversation block shows how users communicate with other users on a certain social media platform. Conversation can allow companies to stay in contact with their customers. However, they should be careful not to get too mixed up in it and manipulate conversation. Sharing stands for the amount of exchanging, distributing and receiving content while presence signifies the extent to which users can see the accessibility of other users (location e.g.). If companies want to participate in sharing content, they should investigate the common interests their users have and consider whether it is relevant to share a certain message. Concerning presence, companies should pay attention to the relative importance of this and the availability and location of their users. The relationships block represents the degree of relationship between users. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre advise companies to pay attention to amount of connections they have and how they address their connections individually on different platforms.

In addition, reputation is all about the influence of others and how users can identity with this. Companies must value their reputation and try to uphold it. Finally, the groups-block functions as a measurement for the amount of communities on a social media platform. If a company forms a community on a social media platform, it is advised that they think of rules and protocols and the strictness of those.

The choices people make in choosing a social platform differ greatly. According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre (2011), social media platform generally focus on three or four primary blocks of the honeycomb. Companies should consider these focuses before engaging with a social media platform. They argue that you can determine a platform's focus by the following the four C's: cognize, congruity, curate and chase. In figure 1.7, an example is given with LinkedIn and Foursquare. The grey blocks are the main focus while the blue blocks represent the secondary focuses.

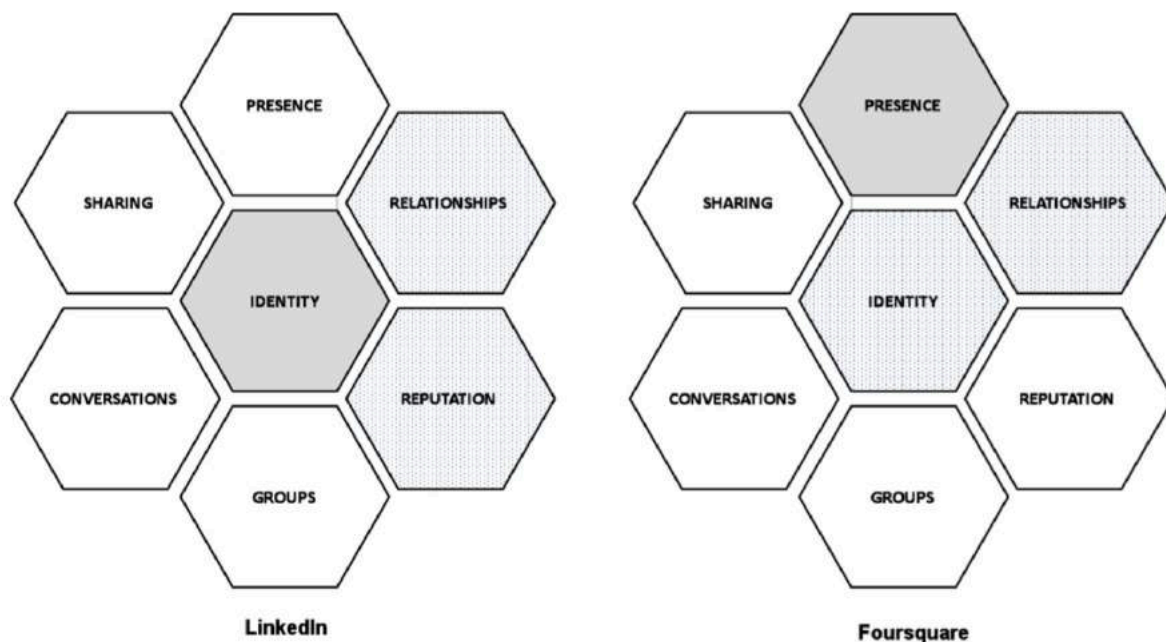


Figure 1.7: The different functionalities of different sites

Cognize refers to recognizing the social media landscape, which unveils the social media functionality of a platform and the engagement of its users. Consequently, a company must develop strategies that are congruent to the different social media functionalities. Then it must act as curator of social media interactions and content. This means the development of an understanding about the amount of interaction the company should have on a particular social media platform. Last of all, chase signifies that companies need to continuously follow developments and trends on social media to remain on track and stay relevant. In this case, it is also important to follow conversations and other interactions that include the company, such as its brand or product.

1.4.3 Community creating

The book *The Social Media Bible* by Safko & Brake (2009) explains how businesses can create a community around their brand. Studies show that company-build communities often fail because their primary focus is on the need of the company rather than on the need of the community. It becomes much more interesting for customers to participate in the community when they feel involved. A strong community does not necessarily mean a large community. If a company wants to sell its product or service, it is better to have the right kind of traffic in a small amount, than a big amount of useless traffic. Therefore, companies need to think carefully about what audience they want to target.

Social media users have different behaviours. If a company allows customers to become co-producers and let them register, react and participate, the community is expected to be more vibrant. Companies should think of the features and functions their community is going to have, the expenses and the time that it takes to develop them. After a community is established, they should be able to adapt the objectives to the desires of the customers. It is very important to note that communities only succeed if they meet the demands of their customers.

A social media strategy consists of two elements, namely social media and strategy. Social media refers to activities, practices and behaviours among communities of people who go online to gather information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. A strategy is a long-term direction of an organisation. The three elements of this strategy are the long-term, direction and organisation. A social media strategy is a component of marketing, which is managing profitable customer relationships. The marketing communications mix, market segmentation and targeting, a SWOT analysis and theory about defining competitors and online marketing are all part of Kotler's and Armstrong's writing about marketing and are essential to the foundations of this report. Several theories on social media marketing, such as the 3-M-framework, honeycomb and community building are also fundamental when analysing the results of the research.

2. Methodology

In this chapter, the research methods are described and justified. The objective of this chapter is to give the reader a clear overview about how data and information are used to answer the central research question and sub questions. Each sub question is different and, therefore, they all needed to be answered using a different research method.

2.1 Objectives of a social media strategy

The owner of the Paleis Hotel is interviewed to get an answer to the sub question about the objectives of creating a social media strategy at the hotel. The Paleis Hotel is an enterprise, whose principal goal is to generate profit. Therefore, the main objective is to attract more customers. This is also formulated in the central question. Marja Hillebrand, who is the owner of the hotel, is interviewed to substantiate her wish to generate more profit by attracting a greater amount of customers to the Paleis Hotel by using social media. There are other, less important but still significant, justifications for implementing a social media strategy as well. The owner is also questioned about this in the interview.

2.2 The current social media audit

The measurement of the current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel before implementing a new strategy is vital to the validity of this research report. An effective strategy cannot be constructed without clear knowledge about the current use of social media platforms. This is investigated by logging in on social media platforms to see what the Paleis Hotel has posted over the last year. Consequently, each social media platform used by the Paleis Hotel is examined via the 3-M-framework (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010) to define the current ways of communication between the company and its (potential) customers.

2.3 SWOT analysis

As written in the theoretical framework of this report, theory about the SWOT analysis is elucidated in the book *Principles of Marketing* by Kotler & Armstrong (2015). Hence, the theory from this book is adopted as a guideline when investigating the company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Additional sources, that provide information about SWOT analyses and are used in this report, are mentioned in the text and acknowledged in the references.

2.4 Target group(s)

The sub question about target groups is answered by combined research from the book *Principles of Marketing* by Kotler & Armstrong (2015) and current data predicting trends in the hotel industry. Although Kotler and Armstrong provide theory about market segmentation and targeting, it is rather difficult to apply this on the market in which the Paleis Hotel operates, since their theory is not specified on that. Consequently, additional sources showing actual data were needed to get a clear overview of the market. Firstly, the market is segmented and then, certain market segments are chosen as a target group.

2.5 Competitors

The research method for answering the sub question about competitors is similar to the sub question about the target group(s). In this case, theory from *Principles of Marketing* by Kotler & Armstrong (2015) is also used to supply the theory as the foundation of the research. More practical information about the competitors comes from an inspection of the current market situation and conducted social media audits of the direct competitors of the Paleis Hotel.

2.6 Content plan

It is important to know how to reach your target group and what pitfalls exist when a content plan for a social media strategy is created. Expertise in this field is essential. Remy Steijger is the head of marketing at Digital Captains, an enterprise whose principal occupation is digital marketing. He is interviewed to acquire knowledge needed to make up a content plan. Findings, generated by the interview with Remy Steijger and answering the other sub questions, are used to create an efficient content plan for the Paleis Hotel. The purpose of answering all the sub questions is to collect data that is essential to answer the central question. This sub question is included to translate the findings into an effective content plan that can be utilised to implement a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel.

3. Results

3.1 Objectives of a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel

On March 14, 2017 an interview was conducted with Marja Hillebrand, the owner of the Paleis Hotel. The purpose of this interview was to acquire knowledge about the objectives of implementing a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel. The full transcript of this interview can be found in the appendix and the interpretation is covered in the analysis section of this report.

3.2 The current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel

It is essential to measure the current social media audit of a company when a social media strategy needs to be created. It is not possible to make a proper analysis about what could be changed without the knowledge of a company's current activities on all social media platforms. Since the exact activities and posts on social media change every day, the 1st of March 2017 was chosen as a review date. The collected results are listed below separated by each social media platform used by the Paleis Hotel.

3.2.1 Facebook

Facebook is one of the social media platforms used by the Paleis Hotel. Its Facebook page has 930 likes, which is the amount of people following the page. 780 people indicated their presence at the hotel on Facebook. Moreover, there are 36 reviews about the Paleis Hotel and the majority is very positive; 30 reviews are rated with five stars. The Facebook page has direct links to the website of the hotel and the Tripadvisor page.

From the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017, 29 messages were posted. These 29 messages are categorized in 6 categories (see figure 3.1). Advertisement means posts with an obvious message to sell. Awards / guest reviews are about posts that mention rewards that have been given to the Paleis Hotel or positive guest reviews. Furthermore, general news is posts about news that may affect customers of the Paleis Hotel, such as a diversion in traffic or a special event close to the hotel. In addition, hotel news is news that is much more involved with the situation in the hotel, such as the acquisition of new furniture in the lobby or a new breakfast menu. Special guests are posts about special guests staying in the Paleis Hotel and miscellaneous are posts that cannot be categorized into the other five categories.

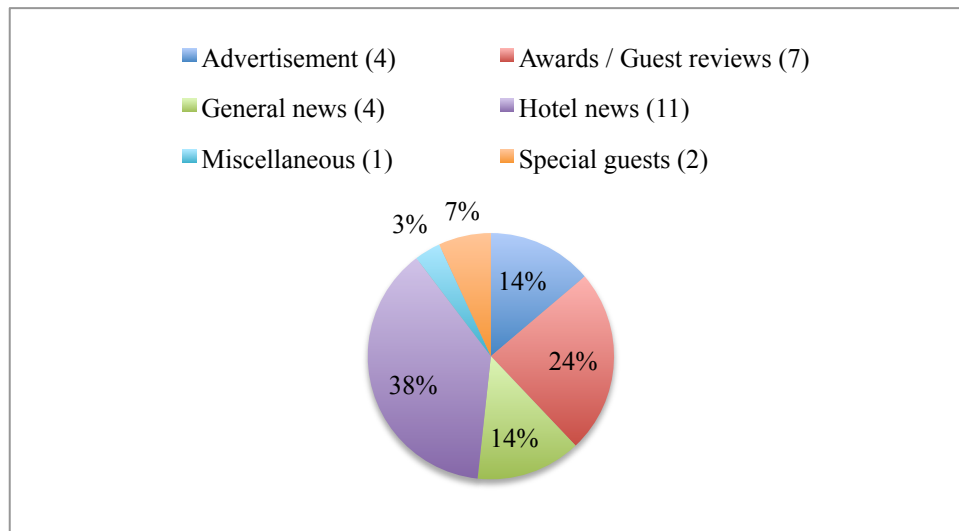


Figure 3.1: Posts on the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel, divided by category (01-03-2016 – 01-03-2017)

The average number of likes depends greatly on the sort of message that is posted. Facebook users can express their satisfaction when seeing a post by giving a like. The more likes a post gets, the more popular the expressed message is. Figure 3.2 shows that posts about awards / guest reviews are the most popular. Behind that, hotel news is also generally popular. Posts that cover advertisements are less popular. Apparently, Facebook users prefer posts that display developments at the hotel rather than commercial messages.

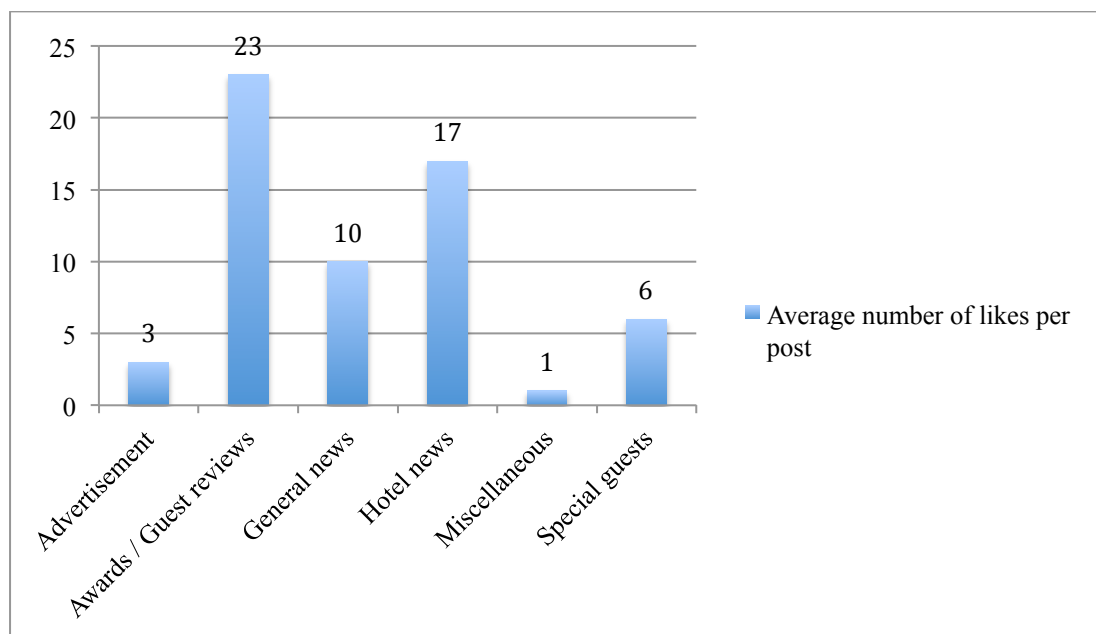


Figure 3.2: Average number of likes per post on the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel, divided by category (01-03-2016 – 01-03-2017)

3.2.2 Twitter

Twitter is used much less extensively than Facebook. Over the last year, only four tweets have been sent out via the Twitter account of the Paleis Hotel. These four tweets were all about rewards received by the Paleis Hotel. The Twitter account has 529 followers and follows 270 accounts.

3.2.3 Tripadvisor

Tripadvisor is a website that allows its members to post reviews about companies in the hospitality business (e.g. hotels, restaurants, bars). It can be considered a social network since it permits users to communicate with each other and businesses to connect with their potential customers. According to a Tripadvisor study (2007), a staggering amount of 97,7% of consumers looks at guest reviews before reserving a room at a hotel. 77.9% of consumers think reviews are extremely or very important when deciding where to stay. Therefore, it can be considered important that the Paleis Hotel has a good reputation on Tripadvisor, which is the most popular review website in the world according to its own claims with more than 60 million members and over 170 million reviews.

In figure 3.2, it can be seen that the Paleis Hotel generally receives very good ratings on Tripadvisor. 91% of the 426 reviews posted on this website are positive or excellent. Only 2% of the reviews are negative or very negative. As a result of this high score, the Paleis Hotel is currently in the top five of best hotels in The Hague. Its exact position switches from time to time because Tripadvisor not only looks at the number of positive reviews but also at the frequentation of reviews posted in ranking hotels. Therefore, the Paleis Hotel stimulates its customers to post reviews on Tripadvisor by sending them an e-mail after checking out with a URL-link to the Tripadvisor website.

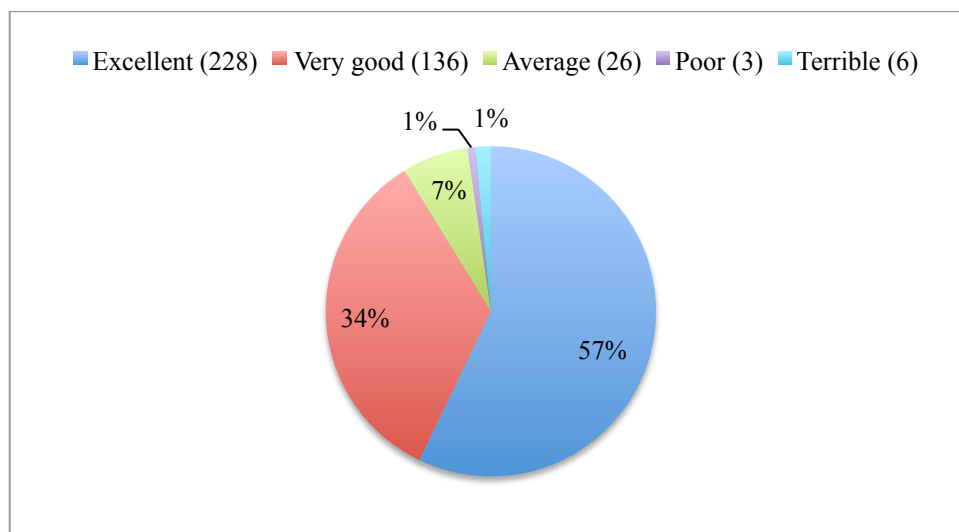


Figure 3.3: Ratings on Tripadvisor for the Paleis Hotel

At the Tripadvisor website, users can indicate with whom they visited an establishment (see figure 3.4). A large majority of the reviews posted on this website has been written by couples who visited the hotel. Furthermore, business travellers are 15% of the review writers, followed by families. Friends and solo travellers are the smallest segments of reviewers.

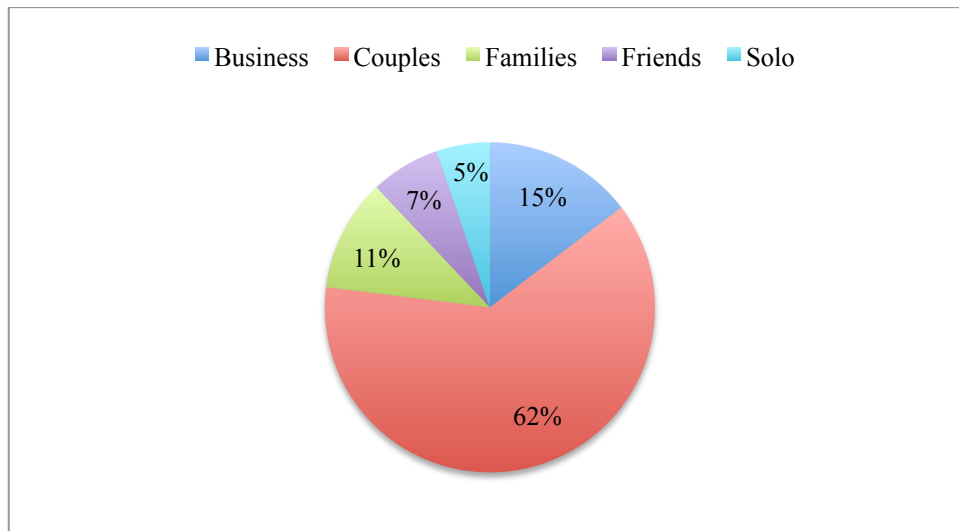


Figure 3.4: The composition of the guests of the Paleis Hotel leaving a review on Tripadvisor

Reviews on Tripadvisor can be divided into different languages. Nearly half of the reviews are written in English, followed by Dutch. Moreover, other European languages like German, French and Italian account for 7% of the total amount of reviews. Remarkably, Chinese is the only non-Western language that is dominant in the number of the reviews posted.

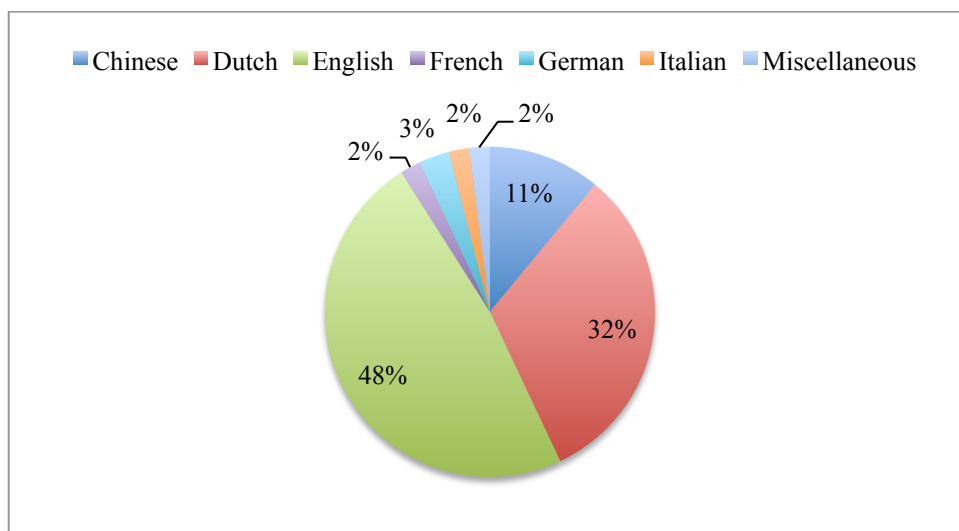


Figure 3.5: The language of reviews of the guests of the Paleis Hotel on Tripadvisor

3.3 Target groups for a social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel

In this chapter, results from research about tourism in The Hague and the Netherlands are published. Firstly, data from the municipality of The Hague and its tourism bureau *Den Haag Marketing* are revealed. After that, some numerals from the Dutch bureau of tourism and conferences (*NBTC*), which were useful for the analysis, are exhibited. Finally, customer data of the Paleis Hotel is displayed. These results are interpreted in the analysis part of this report.

3.3.1 Tourism in The Hague

In September 2016, the municipality of The Hague published a report called *Monitor Toerisme 2011-2015*. This report looks at the tourism trends in The Hague from 2011 till 2015. The amount of guests that stayed in The Hague increased with as much as 30% from 2011 till 2015. The number of nights that guests stayed increased with 26% in the same period. However, the increase of the number of nights that guests stayed in The Hague is less high than the amount of guests.

The Netherlands	Foreign countries	Total	Mutation
430.000 (398.000)	468.000 (293.000)	897.000 (692.000)	+30%

Figure 3.6: The number of (inter)national guests in 2015 (in 2011) in The Hague

The Netherlands	Foreign countries	Total	Mutation
680.000 (643.000)	816.000 (536.000)	1.438.000 (1.179.000)	+26%

Figure 3.7: The amount of nights that (inter)national guest stayed in The Hague in 2015 (in 2011)

Traditionally, The Hague welcomes international guests from countries that are geographically close to the Netherlands, such as Germany, Belgium and the UK (see figure 3.8). The United States is an exception to this and is the most common country of origin of tourists from outside Europe in The Hague. In the category ‘Miscellaneous’, the growth of tourists from China (+167%), Poland (+150%) and Norway (+75%) is remarkable but the total percentage of these guests in comparison with guests from other countries is not significant. Spain (13.000) and Italy (11.000) are also important countries of origin of tourists in The Hague. The most important change is the growth of German, American, British and Belgian guests between 2011 and 2015.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Mutation
Germany	57.000	73.000	76.000	97.000	121.000	+112%
The UK	45.000	52.000	52.000	62.000	68.000	+51%
The USA	30.000	27.000	26.000	30.000	38.000	+27%
Belgium	25.000	30.000	31.000	37.000	43.000	+72%
France	15.000	17.000	17.000	19.000	20.000	+33%
Miscellaneous	121.000	140.000	163.000	172.000	178.000	+47%
Total	293.000	339.000	365.000	417.000	468.000	+60%

Figure 3.8: The most common countries of origin of guests in The Hague

The number of accommodations for tourists in The Hague has slightly decreased while the number of beds has increased from 2011 till 2015. In this same period of time, the occupation degree in hotels has increased with 8%. On the other hand, the average price of a hotel room has decreased with 5%.

Accommodations	Mutation	Number of beds	Mutation
63 (67)	-6%	8.934 (8.017)	+11%

Figure 3.9: Accommodations en number of beds in The Hague in 2015 (in 2012)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Mutation
63%	62%	62%	67%	68%	+8%

Figure 3.10: Occupation degree in hotel in The Hague (2011-2015)

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Mutation
€96,-	€95,-	€95,-	€93,-	€91,-	-5%

Figure 3.11 Average price of hotel room per night (2011-2015)

Conferences stimulate economic growth in The Hague. The most important location for conferences is the World Forum. Over the last three years, the number of conferences organised in The Hague has increased. From 2011 till 2015, the number of conferences has increased with 8%. Conferences attract 32% per cent of business travellers, who generally spend more money on their destination than tourists.

In the *Kanskaart Toerisme* (municipality of The Hague, 2016), the target groups that are the most favourable to visit The Hague are defined. Tourists from Germany, Belgium and the UK generally go to The Hague because of its combination of city, beach and royal character. Visitors from southern European countries such as France, Spain and Italy are more likely to visit the city because of its cultural offerings. This is also the case for visitors from North America.

On the Dutch market, there is a focus on tourists from outside the region of The Hague because they generally spend more money than locals. The municipality of The Hague segmented the market into seven groups with different colours and chose four of those groups to focus on (see figure 3.11).

Adventurous adults	Adore culture, history, surprise and inspiration
Sophisticated elderly	Are intelligent, have class, have an important social network and business instinct, visit the city relatively often and spend a lot per visit
Creative and inspiring adults	Are self-conscious, artistic and open-minded, are trendsetters and attract other groups
Enthusiastic families	Are active, sporty, sociable and come with their family or friends

Figure 3.12 Target groups of the municipality of The Hague in attracting more tourists

3.3.2 Tourism in the Netherlands

The Dutch bureau of tourism and conferences (*NBTC*) made a prediction about the growth of tourism in the Netherlands from 2017 till 2020. In 2017, the bureau expects a growth of 3% in the number of foreign tourists visiting the Netherlands. This will be a new record, namely 16.2 million tourists. Neighbouring countries will be responsible for the biggest part of the growth. More than half of the extra 500.000 tourists that are expected to come are Germans, Belgians and Britons. Tourists from other European countries will also account for a small part of the growth, with Russia as an exception. An increase of 5% for tourists from the United States is expected although it is not certain what the results of the policy-making of president Trump will be. After some years of decrease, the predicted number of tourists from Asia visiting the Netherlands will be slightly growing.

Based on the latest data, the NBTC expects that 17 million tourists will visit the Netherlands in 2020 with an average growth of 2% per year. A precise justification for this predication has yet to be published.

3.3.3 Customers data of the Paleis Hotel

It is important to focus on the current customer data of a company before choosing target groups. The Paleis Hotel uses a program called VIPS to process bookings and to check in and check out guests. This program also saves information about the customers and the hotel, specifically the nationality of guests and the average room rate and occupation degree. Unfortunately, the program does not show age categories of guests and the composition of their travelling party. However, the Tripadvisor page of the Paleis Hotel gives a prediction about the composition of the travelling parties visiting the hotel because customers can indicate this when writing a review. This data is used in chapter 3.2 about the current social media audit.

In figure 3.13, the percentages of guests visiting the Paleis Hotel divided by their nationality from March 2016 till March 2017 are displayed. Guests from the Netherlands and other European countries account for a vast majority of 92% of all guests. Germans are the biggest group non-Dutch visitors for the Paleis Hotel with 29% of the visitors from European countries. They are followed by the Belgians (23%), the British (21%) and the French (6%).

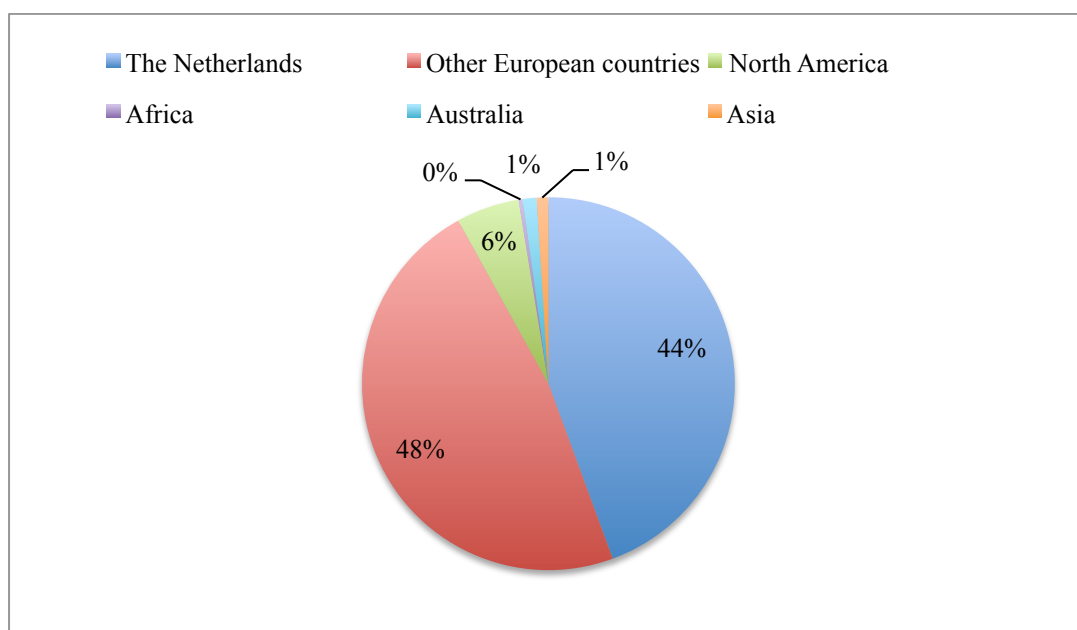


Figure 3.13: Percentage of guests visiting the Paleis Hotel divided by nationality (March 2016 – March 2017)

Figure 3.14 shows the number of the nights that guests stayed in the hotel. On average, Dutch guests stay 1.3 nights in the Paleis Hotel while their European counterparts stay 1.75 nights. Americans, Australians and Africans stay in the hotel for the longest period of time with 2.5 nights on average.

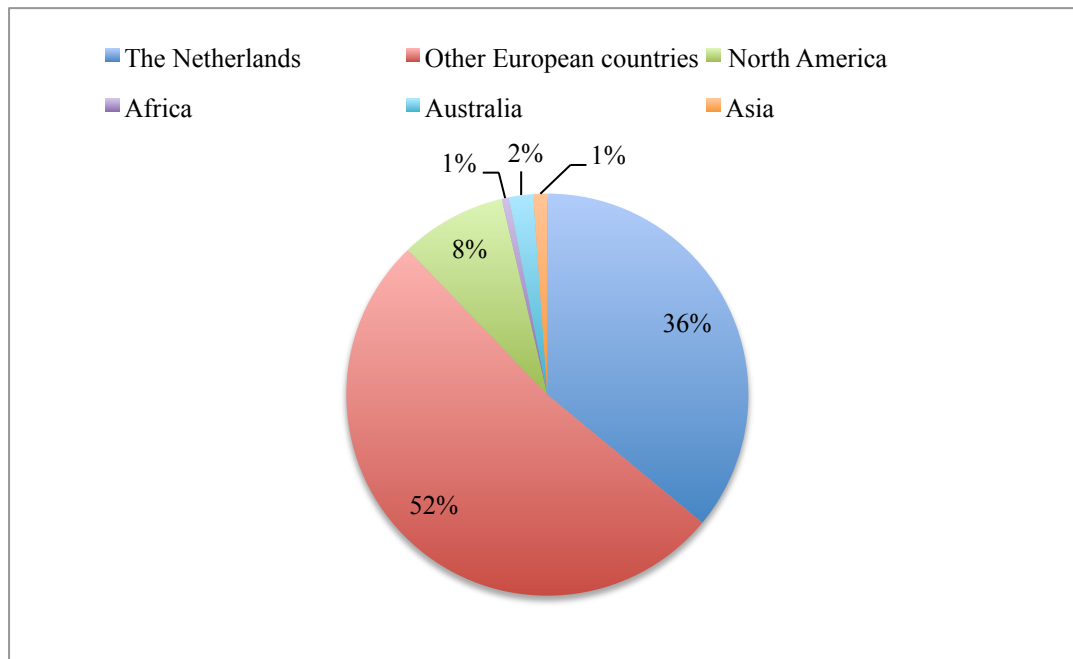


Figure 3.14: Percentage of the number of nights stayed by guests in the Paleis Hotel divided by nationality (March 2016 – March 2017)

The composition of travelling parties visiting the Paleis Hotel can be seen in figure 3.4 in chapter 3.2. These numbers cannot be taken as completely accurate because not every guest who has visited the hotel leaves a review on Tripadvisor. However, it can function as an estimation. Couples are by far the biggest group visiting the hotel with 62%, followed by business travellers (15%) and families (11%).

From March 2016 till March 2017, the average occupation degree of the Paleis Hotel was 71,2%. This is slightly higher than the average occupation degree of hotels in The Hague in 2015. Numbers about the average occupation degree of hotels in The Hague in 2016 are not available. Therefore, it is hard to predict whether the Paleis Hotel is doing better than other hotels in The Hague or that the higher percentage is due to the fact that tourism is growing in the city. The difference between the average room rate of hotels in The Hague and the Paleis Hotel is quite big, namely €32,37 per night. This can be justified by the fact that the Paleis Hotel is a four-star hotel with a place in the top five of best hotels in The Hague (Tripadvisor, 2017).

	Paleis Hotel (03-2016 – 03-2017)	Hotels in The Hague (2015)
Occupation degree	71,2%	68%
Average room rate (per night)	€123,47	€91,-

Figure 3.15: Occupation degree and average room rate of the Paleis Hotel and other hotels in The Hague

3.4 Competitors using social media

It is very relevant to look at what competitors of the Paleis Hotel are doing on social media. If their activities are more extensive and effective, the hotel might lose customers to them. Moreover, their behaviour on social media can also function as a source of inspiration for the Paleis Hotel. Three direct competitors were examined, namely the Carlton Ambassador, Hotel des Indes and the Hilton The Hague. The Carlton Ambassador is a four star hotel while Hotel des Indes and the Hilton The Hague are five star hotels. They are considered as direct competitors because they are in the top three of highest ranked hotels in The Hague on Tripadvisor. Currently, the Paleis Hotel is on place four on this list. The Paleis Hotel has to move past these three hotels to reach its mission, which is becoming the best hotel in The Hague according to its customers.

3.4.1 The Carlton Ambassador

The Carlton Ambassador is mostly active on Facebook. Its page has received 1523 likes and 5327 Facebook users have indicated their presence in the hotel via their page (April 2017). From the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017, 84 messages have been posted on the hotel's page. A majority of these posts are in Dutch. The main subjects of these posts are happenings in the hotel and in the city of Hague. The page received 159 reviews, with a 4,5 (out of 5) rating on average.

On Twitter, the hotel has 2900 followers. It is not very active on this social media platform. There were only four messages sent out over the last year (March 2016 – March 2017). The Carlton Ambassador does not have an Instagram account.

The hotel is ranked on number 3 on the scale of best hotels in The Hague according to its customers on Tripadvisor. It received 531 reviews (April 2017). The staff is very consistent in replying to reviews. They reply on positive and negative reviews with great enthusiasm.

3.4.2 Hotel des Indes

Hotel des Indes has a well-designed Facebook page. There is a short introductory text about the hotel on the page. There are two videos on the page as well, one about the history of the hotel and one that gives the customer an impression about how the hotel looks. The page has received 6137 likes and 16194 people have indicated their presence in the hotel (April, 2017). From the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017, 75 messages have been posted on the hotel's page. These messages are mostly about happenings in the hotel and The Hague but sometimes also tell a story about the employees of the hotel. All of these posts are in English. The page received 513 reviews, with a 4,5 (out of 5) rating on average.

On Twitter, Hotel des Indes has 989 followers and from March 2016 till March 2017, 49 messages have been sent out. The hotel also has an Instagram account, followed by 1224 users. From March 2016 till March 2017, 37 messages were posted on Instagram. The messages on Twitter and Instagram relate to the same subjects as the ones posted on Facebook.

Hotel des Indes is ranked number 2 on the Tripadvisor-scale of best hotels in The Hague according to its customers. It has received 855 reviews that are generally very positive (April 2017). The hotel staff replies on all reviews, whether positive or negative.

3.4.3 Hilton The Hague

Hilton The Hague is very active on Facebook. From March 2016 till March 2017, it has posted as much as 438 messages on its page. The subjects of these messages vary from happenings in the hotel and The Hague to commercial messages such as discounts and the promotion of other hotels belonging to the Hilton hotel chain. Most of these messages are in English. The Facebook page has received 2855 likes and 12786 people have indicated their presence at the hotel. It has received 343 reviews as well, with a 4,6 (out of 5) score on average (April 2017).

The hotel is also active on Twitter and Instagram. On Twitter, it has 1696 followers and 354 tweets have been sent out from March 2016 till March 2017. On Instagram, it has 1365 followers and 229 messages have been sent out in this same period.

Hilton The Hague is the highest ranked hotel on the Tripadvisor scale of best hotels in The Hague according to its customers (April 2017). As Hotel des Indes and the Carlton Ambassador, the Hilton replies to every of the 1501 reviews it has received, whether positive or negative.

3.5 Social media content plan

In this part of the report, the groundwork for the social media content plan is laid down. Firstly, potential social media platforms are compared by functionality through the honeycomb of social media (Kietzman, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). Furthermore, an interview that was conducted with Remy Steijger, the head of marketing at Digital Captains, is briefly discussed. Lastly, the use of social media by the target groups of the Paleis Hotel is investigated.

3.5.1 Potential social media platforms

In the theoretical framework of this report, the honeycomb of social media is introduced. In figure 3.16, the model is once again displayed. The honeycomb can help marketers to determine the functionality of a social media platform. Seven aspects are ranked by importance: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. More information about the honeycomb of social can be found in chapter 1.4.2.

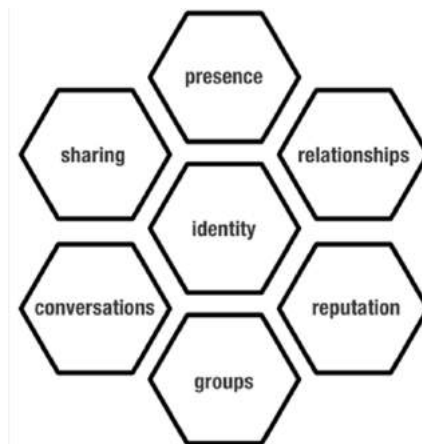


Figure 3.16: The honeycomb of social media

Nathaniel Haefner is lead designer and brander at Nibl, which is a website that functions as a market place for content creators. He investigated a wide array of social media platforms through the honeycomb of social media. Three potential social media platforms for the Paleis Hotel are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter because they are all in the top four most popular social media platforms worldwide. YouTube is also part of this top four but not interesting to the Paleis Hotel since it functions through video creating, which is very time-consuming and not necessary for the hotel to share its content. In addition, these three potential social media platforms are generally easy to use and the Paleis Hotel's competitors are active on these platforms as well (see chapter 3.4 & 4.5).



Figure 3.17: The honeycomb of social media for Instagram, Facebook & Twitter (N. Haefner, 2014)

In figure 3.17, the analysis that Nathaniel Haefner made for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter can be seen. The more saturated the colour is, the more important the category is.

Currently, Instagram has 600 million users worldwide. It allows users to share pictures and short videos with their followers. Users can also follow other users and express their emotion on messages posted by those other users through liking and commenting. An important aspect is using hashtags together with photos. Users can find photos in a certain category by searching with hashtags. For instance, a Twitter user could look for photos of The Hague by using the hashtag #thehague. As indicated in figure 3.17, Instagram's emphasis is sharing and reputation. Reputation is important on this platform. Popular individuals on Instagram can earn money by posting photos or videos with a commercial aspect. Moreover, firms can present new products or developments to their followers and promote their existing products or services. There also is a slight emphasis on identity and conversation since the extent to which users show their identity can be very significant and Instagram sparks conversations between users via commenting on photos/videos and private messaging.

Facebook is by far the biggest social media platform. It currently has 1.86 billion users. The array of actions users can pursue on this social media platform is very extensive. Nearly all the boxes of the analysis (see figure 3.17) are dark-coloured. Identity is very important on Facebook and users are able to portray almost anything about their lives or activities. Sharing this information with friends is the essence of this social media platform, which makes the boxes sharing and relationships essential. There are numerous ways to start a conversation, by commenting on posts or private messaging for instance. The possibility of creating groups does exist on Facebook as well and, therefore, community creating can play a big role. On Facebook, reputation can also be important because users are permitted to establish one for themselves by portraying a certain lifestyle or sharing their opinion.

Twitter has approximately 313 million users. It allows its users to send out short messages (140 characters) to their followers. Photos or short videos can be attached to these tweets. Users can also express their content or discontent by commenting on or copying messages, which is called retweeting. Sharing and reputation are the most important aspects of this social media platform. Users share their messages and these can be opinionated or portraying a certain lifestyle, which can increase or decrease their reputation. Conversation and identity are secondary in substantiality. Users can engage in conversations with their followers but the platform does not really offer an ergonomic way in doing this. Identity can be important if users want it to be that way, but this is not essential.

3.5.2 Interview with Remy Steijger

On April 14, 2017 an interview was conducted with Remy Steijger, who is the marketing director at Digital Captains, a digital marketing company. The purpose of this interview was to acquire knowledge about effective behaviour on social media, which has been used to create a social media content plan. The full transcript of this interview can be found in the appendix.

According to Remy Steijger, Facebook is the most important social media platform for companies to use. It has the biggest amount of users from all ages and on Facebook, companies have the possibility to look into the demographics and interests of users. The Paleis Hotel can also consider using Instagram, but then it should have enough interesting content to post on this social media platform and a sufficient amount of time to maintain this. Furthermore, Remy Steijger advised to post at least three messages per week on Facebook to remain visible. These messages should be attractive to the followers of the Paleis Hotel. Including photos or videos can help achieving this. He recommended to create an Excel-file in which posts can be planned ahead in different categories to stay relevant. Such an Excel-file could function as a content plan. This is elaborated in chapter 4.6. Moreover, there are also programs in which companies can program their posts on beforehand. Remy Steijger urges the Paleis Hotel to use such a program because it can save a lot of time. He also stated that Facebook allows companies to send out the same message in different languages, which can be very useful in targeting customers in different countries. To generate more followers, the Paleis Hotel should consider starting a like-campaign on Facebook through which the company's posts or page are promoted.

3.5.3 The use of social media by the target groups of the Paleis Hotel

In chapter 4.4, the target groups for the social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel are determined. Concerning domestic tourism, three profiles have been chosen, namely adventurous adults, the sophisticated elderly and creating and inspiring adults. These profiles were created by a marketing company called SmartAgent and are also used in the marketing strategy of the municipality of The Hague. Regarding international tourism, the focus will be on tourists coming from Belgium, Germany and the UK. It is very relevant to look which social media platforms are popular with the target groups because it would not be useful for the Paleis Hotel to use social media platforms that are not utilised by its target groups.

The report *National Social Media Investigation 2016* from Newcom Research & Consultancy was used to analyse the use of social media by the Dutch population. Facebook is second on the list of most popular social media platforms, just behind WhatsApp, with 9.6 million users. Facebook is increasingly popular with adults and the elderly. From 2014 till 2015, the amount of adults using Facebook increased with 15%. From 2015 till 2016, the amount of people from the age category 65 – 79 years using Facebook increased with 9%. Twitter decreased in popularity with adults and the elderly, respectively with 6% and 9%. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat are more and more popular, but mostly used by teenagers and young adults.

In the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands, Facebook is also the most popular social media platform. In Belgium, there were 6.6 million Facebook-users in December 2016 (HLN, 2016). In the United Kingdom, Facebook has as much as 32 million users (Social-media.co.uk, 2016). In Germany, it was the most visited social media platform, with twice as many visits as number two on the list in 2014 (Meedia.de, 2017).

4. Analysis

4.1 Objectives of a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel

In this part of the report, the findings of the interview with Marja Hillebrand, the owner of the Paleis Hotel, are analysed. This is done to clarify the objectives that the Paleis Hotel directory has to implement a social media strategy.

Marja Hillebrand started the Paleis Hotel because it had always been a dream of her. She worked in several hotels before starting her own business. While she was working in these hotels, she saw more and more things that she would have done differently. She thinks that the most important aspect of running a hotel is delivering a perfect customer service. Hospitality and servitude are the most important values, even more important than generating profit. She thinks that you should not be in the hotel business for the money, but for the people who you are serving. The slogan of the Paleis Hotel is ‘a home away from home’ because she tries to create a feeling a hospitality that is so extraordinary that guests will feel like they are at home.

The long-term strategy of the Paleis Hotel is to become the best hotel in The Hague and one of the best hotels in the Netherlands in the category small hotels. The main focus is what the customers think of the Paleis Hotel, rather than the judgement of paid-booking sites or competitors. Tripadvisor is an important indicator because it allows customers to give their opinion on the functioning of the hotel.

The owner does not only want to have a social media strategy to attract customers, but also to be able to provide hospitable service. As an entrepreneur, she does not have a lot of time to think about a strategy. However, she thinks that it is vital to be visible on social media these days. At first, she was reluctant to use social media since it typically is not very personal while the Paleis Hotel strives to offer the most personal service there is. Therefore, it is important that the mission of the Paleis Hotel is clearly distinguishable in its activities on social media. The main goal of a social media strategy should be about building customer-relationships rather than generating financial profit. This means that the activities of the Paleis Hotel should be portrayed via social media. Customers must to be able to see what is happening in the hotel and feel like they are a part of it. Community creating and bonding with customer should be important aspects of the Paleis Hotel’s activities on social media, according to the owner.

In the future, the owner would like to expand the Paleis Hotel or open a new hotel with the same philosophy that the Paleis Hotel has.

4.2 The current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel

In this chapter, the results of the current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel are analysed. This is done with the 3-M-Framework (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010). This model conceptualises the interaction between a company and its customers on social media. An explanation of this model can be found in the theoretical framework. Each social media platform currently used by the Paleis Hotel will be examined based on this model.

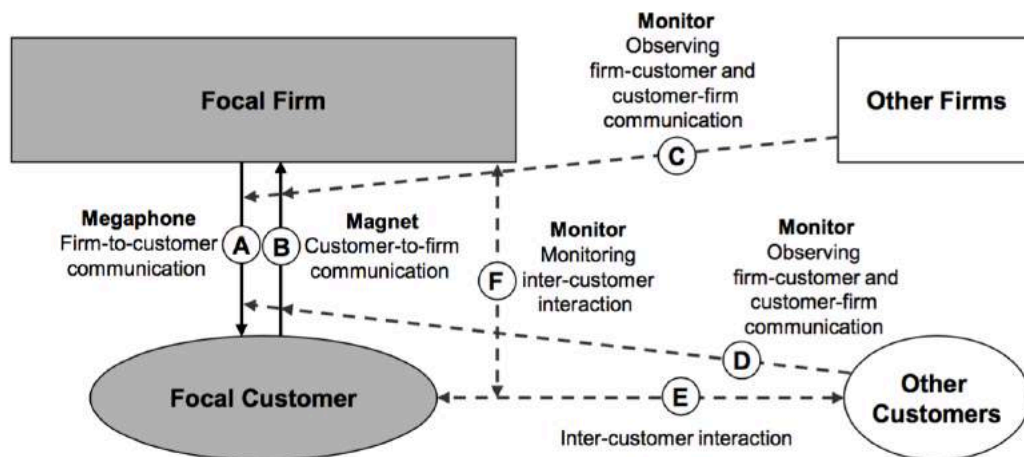


Figure 4.1 The 3-M-framework

4.2.1 Facebook

Megaphone is the main form of communication used by the Paleis Hotel on Facebook. A wide array of messages is posted on this social media platform for (potential) customers to see. Most messages are about news in the hotel, which can be important happenings or developments. Those posts are generally popular and receive on average 17 likes. The most favoured messages are about the Paleis Hotel winning awards or receiving positive guest reviews. Posts with a clear message to sell are not popular at all and receive 3 likes on average. From the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017, 29 messages were posted on the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel. According to research conducted by Research Buddy (2012), maximum user engagement is achieved when a company posts between one and four messages per week. This means that the Paleis Hotel should have posted between 52 and 208 messages in the period mentioned above. Therefore, it can be stated that the Paleis Hotel can use the megaphone-aspect of Facebook more extensively. Especially since it is its main form of communication with customers.

Magnet communication also happens at the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel. Users sometimes reply on messages posted on the page. The Paleis Hotel generally likes these comments to show the users that it has been noticed. The page also receives ratings from guests, 36 in total have been posted. At first, the Paleis Hotel was not consistent in reacting to reviews but in the last months, it has started with thanking guests for their reviews and dealing with their feedback. Concerning reacting to messages of Facebook users, the Paleis Hotel already does what it has to do.

Later in this report, the social media behaviour of competitors is examined. If customers and competitors monitor the behaviour of the Paleis Hotel on Facebook is hard to predict, since Facebook does not offer this kind of data for free.

4.2.2 Twitter

As indicated in results section of this report, the Paleis Hotel makes very little use of Twitter. From the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017, four tweets have been sent out. These four tweets were all about rewards the Paleis Hotel has received. According to Social Media Today (2015), research conducted by several social media companies shows that a company should send out between three and five tweets per day. The Paleis Hotel is, by far, not reaching this number. Moreover, there is not any communication from customers to the hotel, which is quite logical since there is hardly any activity on the account. Therefore, it can also be assumed that other customers and competitors do not intensively monitor the Twitter profile of the Paleis Hotel. If the Paleis Hotel decides to expand its activities on Twitter, there will be a lot of work to do.

4.2.3 Tripadvisor

On Tripadvisor, companies can only directly communicate with customers. This can only be done after a customer has posted a review about the company. The Paleis Hotel has a good reputation on Tripadvisor: 91% of the reviews are positive or very positive and they have permanent position in the top five of best hotels in The Hague.

It is very important for the Paleis Hotel to react on bad reviews or feedback of guests to uphold its reputation on Tripadvisor. In 2012, a study conducted by Tripadvisor and PhoCusWright showed that 84% of Tripadvisor users agree that an appropriate management response to a bad review improves their impression of the hotel while 64% of users agree that an aggressive/defensive management response to a bad review makes them less likely to book that hotel. The Paleis Hotel is very consistent in replying on reviews and these replies are always positive and understanding. This means that the Paleis Hotel is doing what it is supposed to do on this social media platform.

Potential guests monitor the reviews and see that the hotel is positively and constructively reacting on reviews. This will make guests, according to research, more likely to visit the Paleis Hotel. Guests who have already stayed at the Paleis Hotel are stimulated to leave a review on Tripadvisor. Once they have checked out, they receive an e-mail with a link to the Tripadvisor page of the hotel. This is done because the frequentation of reviews posted on the website is also an important measurement for a high ranking.

4.3 Social media SWOT analysis of the Paleis Hotel

This section of the report covers the results of a social media SWOT analysis of the Paleis Hotel. It is important to know a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats because then one can take this into account while creating a strategy. The theoretical framework of this paper gives a short explanation about SWOT analyses.

The results of this SWOT analysis have been found by looking at the resources of the company and the trends in hospitality industry. The mission of the Paleis Hotel has also been taken into account while composing this analysis. Furthermore, the aspects of this analysis are compared with all the points of the marketing communications mix (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015). The promotion tools of the marketing communications mix are not equally important because they do not all fit into the philosophy of the Paleis Hotel and the aim of the social media strategy. Nonetheless, they were all taken into consideration to prevent obliterating certain aspects and with that, creating an incomplete strategy.

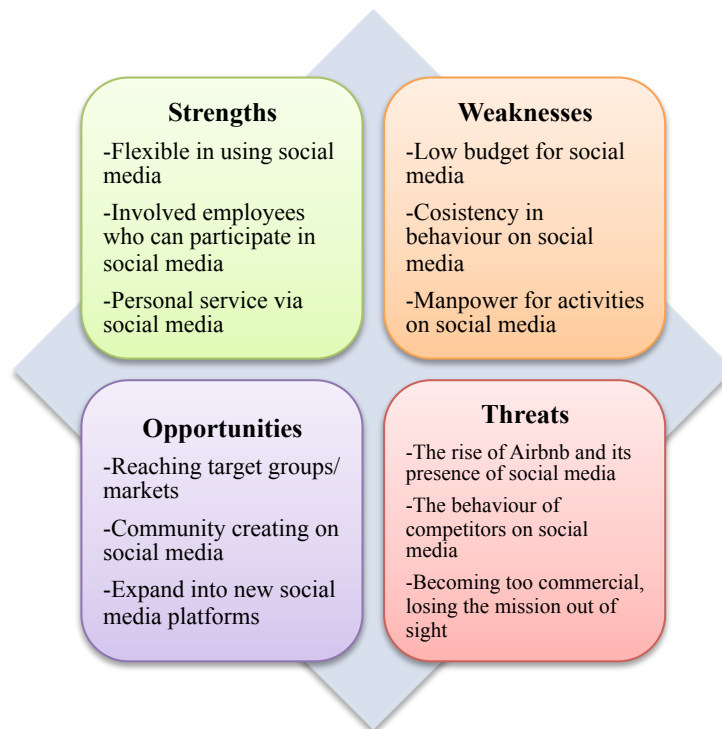


Figure 4.2: A social media SWOT analysis of the Paleis Hotel

4.3.1 Strengths

The Paleis Hotel is a small hotel. The company only has two principal managerial posts, which are the owner of the hotel and the hotel manager. Because there is not an extensive directory board, there is not a lot of consultation need to implement changes. Therefore, the Paleis Hotel can quickly anticipate on developments and trends in the hospitality business. Their quick anticipation serves in their best interest when they want to reach potential customers.

Intensive employee engagement on social media, which is already happening with other company activities, can greatly benefit the Paleis Hotel when a social media strategy is implemented. The Paleis Hotel only has 11 employees. These employees are constantly motivated by the directory to think about the direction the company is heading and changes that could be made. They are very engaged in the development of the hotel. There is a very open culture within the company. Hence, employees can also easily be stimulated to think together with the directory about messages that can be send out on social media platforms. Companies such as Starbucks and L'Oreal have had very successful marketing campaigns on social media when they actively motivated employees to participate in it. This could also work in smaller companies, like the Paleis Hotel. Customers will feel more engagement when they are able to see what happens inside a company and this creates certain goodwill among them.

The most important value of the Paleis Hotel is delivering extraordinary hospitality to customers. This can be done on social media as well. Questions, complaints and remarks can be treated with utmost precision by its engaged team of employees. This is already done on Tripadvisor and sporadically on Facebook, but can be implemented on other social media platforms as well. Two tools of the marketing communications mix can also be used, namely personal selling and direct marketing. Personal selling is a company's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships. Direct marketing creates direct connections with carefully targeted individual customers to obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting relationships. However, the Paleis Hotel should be careful with these tools and especially with direct marketing, which is a more aggressive way of selling than personal selling. This is because the owner does not want the social media strategy to be too narrowly focused on commercial activities since it does not fit with the company's philosophy.

4.3.2 Weaknesses

Since the Paleis Hotel is a small hotel, there is not a lot of budget available for social media marketing. A tool like advertising would be difficult to include in a strategy because it might take a lot of financial resources to advertise on social media. Fortunately, the goal of a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel is not to generate as much profit as possible, but to build sustainable customer relationships.

A current problem of the social media behaviour of the Paleis Hotel is that the messages posted on social media are not consistent. The period of time between two posts varies greatly. There is not a coherent structure. This can be confusing for the customers because the messages are not distributed in a clear manner. However, a social media strategy can change this pattern.

The small size of the Paleis Hotel directory and its employees can be seen as strength on the grounds that the directory is flexible and the employees are involved. On the other hand, this might also be a weakness. Implementing and executing a social media strategy might be a time-consuming task. The question would then be if the Paleis Hotel has enough manpower to do this. Great attention should be paid to this when a social media strategy is implemented. It should not be too time-consuming for the directory and its employees.

4.3.3 Opportunities

The use of social media is a great opportunity to reach new market segments. People from all over the world and from different age categories use social media. Therefore, the possibilities are numerous. In chapters 3.3 and 4.4, the market is segmented and targeted.

As the owner of the Paleis Hotel stated in the interview about the objectives of implementing a social media strategy, it is very important that the Paleis Hotel delivers a very personal message on social media. Customers should feel as they are part of the hotel. If this is the case, they will be loyal to the hotel and this creates the possibility of creating a community on social media. This fits perfectly with the philosophy of the Paleis Hotel, which is offering an extraordinary personalized service and selling an experience rather than accommodations. In addition, it connects entirely with the public relations-tool of the marketing communications mix.

The discovery of new social media platforms can be a great opportunity. Currently, the Paleis Hotel is mainly active on Facebook and Tripadvisor and sporadically on Twitter. From 2010 to 2016, Instagram has grown to a social media platform with 500 million users. Snapchat added 50 million users only in 2016 and is still growing. The amount of LinkedIn users has also steadily been growing over the last years and it currently has 467 million users and primarily focuses on business people. Different social media platforms offer different opportunities and each of them can be explored as a possibility to reach the target market of the Paleis Hotel.

4.3.4 Threats

The rise in popularity of AirBnB, which is a platform that allows property owners to rent out living spaces to tourists or business travellers, is a trend in the tourism sector. In 2015, AirBnB has grown with 47% in The Hague (Trouw, 2016). The municipality also acknowledged the growth of AirBnB in their city. According to TravelNext, more and more tourists choose to use AirBnB because it offers them the possibility to discover a city like a local. The growth of AirBnB can cause the Paleis Hotel to lose potential customers. Therefore, the hotel should anticipate on this trend of offering an experience that makes customers feel like they are locals. This can be done on social media. Customers will feel involved when the hotel sends out messages about news in the hotel and the city of The Hague, which simultaneously creates the feeling that customers are part of the local community.

AirBnB is not the only threat to the Paleis Hotel. The behaviour of competitors on social media is crucial to keep in mind. If competitors manage to create a more attractive brand image on social media, customers are more likely to choose for them. In chapter 3.4 and 4.5, the behaviour of competitors on social media is examined.

The company should be aware that it will not become too commercially driven. As the owner stated in the interview, the main goal is to create an experience for customers rather than generating as much profit as possible. If this mission is not portrayed like this on social media, the hotel will lose its credibility. Therefore, the tool sales promotion on the marketing communications mix should not be exploited on social media. Accordingly, the mission and philosophy should always be kept in mind when the Paleis Hotel participates on social media.



Figure 4.3: The marketing communications mix

4.4 Target groups for a social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel

In chapter 3.3 of this report, the current tourism market in The Hague and the Netherlands was illustrated together with data about guests who stayed at the Paleis Hotel. On the basis of this results, target markets were chosen, which is explained in this chapter. It is divided into three parts: domestic tourism, international tourism and business travellers. It is important to mention that excluding certain market segments does not fit the open culture of the Paleis Hotel. The company seeks to create an atmosphere in which everyone is welcome. However, the hotel will need to differentiate to have an effective strategy because only then the people who are interested in its message will receive it in good order. Since the Paleis Hotel is not a big hotel chain with an extensive marketing budget, to reach the mass would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without spending money. On the other hand, the hotel does not wish to use niche marketing and micromarketing because it does not want to exclude any type of customer. Therefore, it is advised to use differentiated, segmented marketing rather than mass marketing or niche- and micromarketing when a social media strategy is implemented.

4.4.1 Domestic tourism

Over the last year, 44% per cent of guests who stayed at the Paleis Hotel were Dutch. As a result, it is a very important target group. Since the Dutch population as a whole is very diverse, the municipality of The Hague has used the segmentation tool of a company called Smart Agent. This tool divides people in segments by means of their social status, personality and interests. Consequently, four segment groups were chosen for the municipality to focus on, which are mentioned in chapter 3.3. Neither the resources nor the knowledge for conducting an extensive marketing segmentation and profile creating were available for this report. Therefore, it has been decided to look at the four segments that the municipality of The Hague picked and then choose segments with guest profiles that could be interested in visiting the Paleis Hotel.

The Paleis Hotel can be defined as a boutique hotel, which is a stylish, small hotel, typically one situated in a fashionable urban location. This can be attractive for the adventurous adults, sophisticated elderly and creative and inspiring adults. Adventurous adults love culture and history which can easily be found in the historic heart of The Hague where the Paleis Hotel is situated. Furthermore, the hotel itself is situated in a monumental 17th century building with an interesting history. On the other hand, the sophisticated elderly is also a group that the Paleis Hotel should seek to reach. They are well provided with capital and loyal customers who may visit a city several times. By virtue of their wealth, they can easily afford to stay in a four-star hotel, which is more expensive than the average room rate in The Hague. Lastly, creative and inspiring adults are the ones that can help the Paleis Hotel to become better known because they are identified as inspiring. For this target group, it could be interesting to visit the Paleis Hotel as well since the hotel is situated in the high-end but trendy Noordeinde neighbourhood, which should be very interesting for them.

It has been concluded that the enthusiastic families should not be seen as a primary target group of the social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel. The hotel cannot be typically identified as a family hotel since it does not have any family rooms. It might also be too expensive to reserve multiple rooms with the rates that the Paleis Hotel offers. In addition, the hotel is situated in the city centre of The Hague where there are a lot of activities for (young) adults and elder people, but where there is not that much to do for children. As can be seen in figure 3.4, only 11% of the reviews posted on Tripadvisor come from families and that suggests that a major part of the guests have not stayed with their family in the hotel. 11% still is a significant amount and families will always be welcome at the hotel thanks to its open culture. However, it should not be a primary target market

4.4.2 International tourism

As stated in chapter 3.3, international tourism in The Hague has grown with 60% from 2011 till 2015 and this growth is expected to continue. From March 2016 till March 2017, 66% of the guests in the Paleis Hotel were foreign. This is a crucial part of the customer base that has to be included in a social media strategy.

As much as 48% of the total amount of guests come from European countries. Within this group, German, Belgian and British guests are the biggest groups with 73% in total. These guests are not only important for the Paleis Hotel but also are the biggest groups of foreign visitors in the city of The Hague with the highest growth rate (see figure 3.7). According to NBTC (2017), this group of tourists coming from neighbouring countries (Germany, Belgium & UK) of the Netherlands is expected to be the biggest growth market from 2017 till 2020. Therefore, it is wise for the Paleis Hotel to focus on German, Belgian and British tourists with a social media strategy.

The advantage of targeting tourists from these three neighbouring countries is that they have the same reasons for visiting The Hague. Generally, they are interested in The Hague because of its combination of city, beach and royal character. This is different than the smaller segments of tourists from southern Europe (France, Spain & Italy) and the US who come only for the cultural offerings of the city. Because the German, Belgian and British tourists on social media generally have the same interests for coming to The Hague, the Paleis Hotel can profit from that. Moreover, the Paleis Hotel is a four-star hotel that commonly offers a room rate higher than the average room rate in The Hague. According to the municipality of The Hague, foreign tourists generally spend €215 per day while Dutch tourists only spend €95. This indicates that foreign tourists are customarily financially stronger or more willing to spend than the Dutch tourists. Therefore, it has been decided not to target certain income groups in the neighbouring countries.

Other European countries are less interesting to target because they are a smaller part of the customer base. The interest in The Hague of tourists from southern European countries is also different than that of the ones from neighbouring countries, which makes it hard to focus on them both without sending out mixed signals. However, the municipality of The Hague is trying to attract tourists from southern European countries as well. The Paleis Hotel should keep this trend in mind and react on it when this is needed. This is the same with Chinese tourists. The municipality of The Hague has launched a campaign in China to promote the city. The Paleis Hotel should also be aware of this and keep looking at the on-going movements of tourist streams from different countries, such as China. Concerning tourists from the United States, they should not be primary target since because they have different motivations for going to The Hague and as long as the outcome of president Trump's policy-making is unknown, it is not considered a safe bet.

4.4.3 Business travellers

Business travel is a totally different market than leisure travel. As can be seen in chapter 3.3, the number of conferences, which attracts 32% of business travellers, has grown with 8% from 2011 till 2015. If this trend continues, the Paleis Hotel should also be able to target this group of travellers.

In 2014, Kelly McGuire, executive director of hospitality and travel global practises at SAS, and Dr. Breffni Noone, assistant professor at the Pennsylvania State University School of Hospitality Management, conducted research about what hotels can do to effectively reach business travellers. Unsurprisingly, the result was that business travellers have different motivations than leisure travellers when reserving a hotel room. Firstly, rating sites like Tripadvisor are even more important for them than for leisure travellers. They do not only look at the sentiment of a review, but also at the description of the experience. Furthermore, they are very sensitive to loyalty programs, which give them discounts or extras. It is believed that business travellers care less about the room rate than leisure travellers. However, it turns out that this is not true. The study showed that they are as sensitive to prices as other customer segments are.

It is imaginable that business travellers do not have the time to participate in a social media community that the Paleis Hotel seeks to create. They are led mostly by positive reviews on the Internet. Luckily, the Paleis Hotel generally receives very positive ratings on booking websites and rating websites such as Tripadvisor (see chapter 3.3). If the hotel wants to attract more business travellers, it should stay focused on getting as many positive reviews as possible rather than trying to include them in an online community with leisure travellers. Tools such as discount deals or loyalty programs can be considered, but do not concern a social media strategy.

4.5 Competitors using social media

In this part of the report, the behaviour of competitors of the Paleis Hotel on social media is compared with the current media audit of the Paleis Hotel. This data is compared to give an overview of how the Paleis Hotel performs on social media compared to its competitors. This illustrates if the Paleis Hotel is doing well and if there is anything it can do more effectively.

4.5.1 Facebook

As indicated in chapter 3.2, the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel has received 930 likes and 780 users have indicated their presence at the hotel on this platform. This is far lower than its competitors (see figure 4.4). The amount of reviews posted via Facebook is lower for the Paleis Hotel in comparison with its competitors as well. All of this can partly be explained by the fact that the Paleis Hotel is a small hotel and, therefore, receives a lower amount of guests, which results in a lower number of likes, check-ins and reviews on Facebook than its bigger competitors. However, the Paleis Hotel should not give up because it is a small hotel. It must not allow its competitors to get more exposure because then it risks losing customers. Extensive attention is paid to generating more exposure on Facebook in chapter 4.6. Another remarkable finding is that the Paleis Hotel has sent out far less messages than its competitors from March 2016 till March 2017 (see figure 4.5). By sending out more messages than the Paleis Hotel, the competitors again get more exposure on Facebook. Nonetheless, companies should not be too eager to send out a lot of posts since then the central message might get lost and customers might find following the Facebook page of the Paleis Hotel too overwhelming.

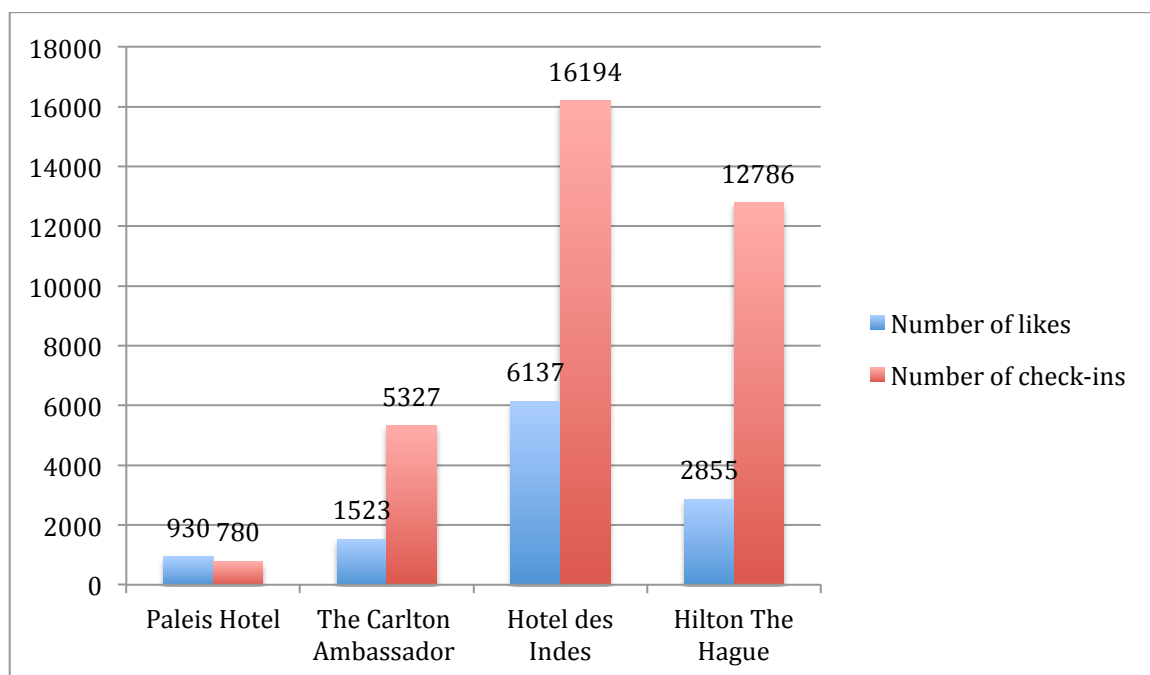


Figure 4.4: The amount of likes and check-ins of the Paleis Hotel and its competitors on Facebook (April 2017)

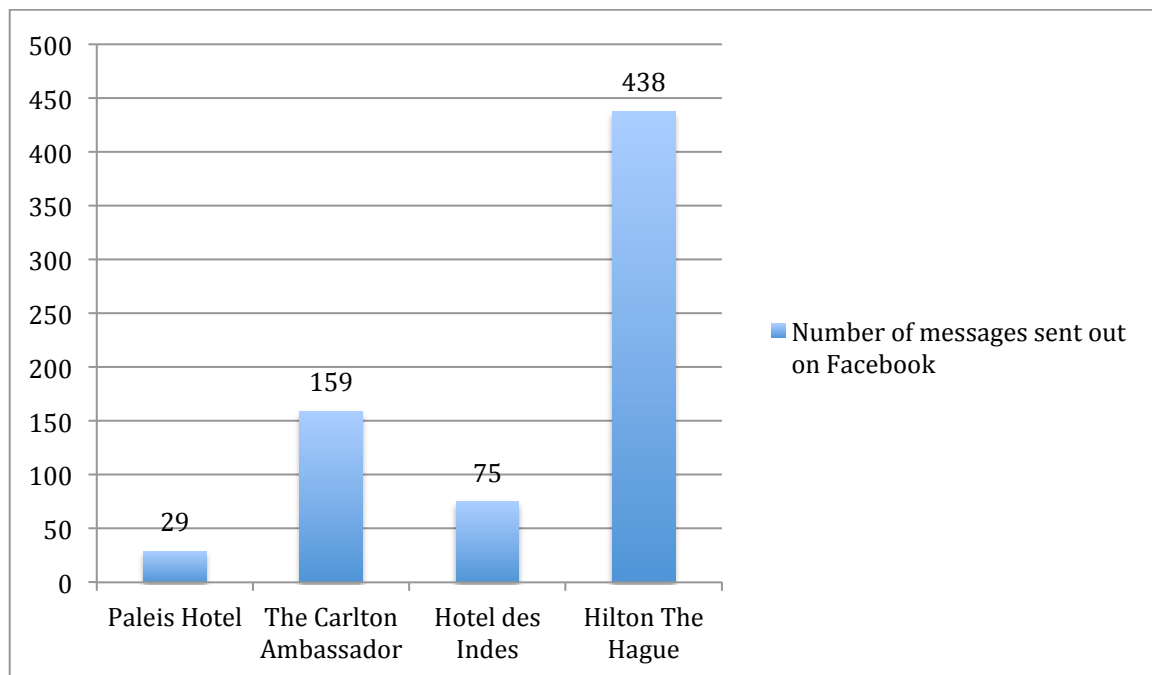


Figure 4.5: The amount of messages send out by the Paleis Hotel and its competitors on Facebook (March 2016 – March 2017)

Furthermore, there were not a lot of interesting features on the Facebook pages of the competitors of the Paleis Hotel. Hotel des Indes has two introductory videos on its Facebook page that give customers an impression of the hotel. This could also be a good idea for the Paleis Hotel. Concerning languages used in the posts of the Paleis Hotel's competitors, this depends. The Carlton Ambassador mostly sends out messages in Dutch while Hilton The Hague does this predominately in English. Hotel des Indes only posts messages in English. Because there is not a clear rule about this by looking at its competitors, the Paleis Hotel can decide for itself which language it rather uses on Facebook. This is treated in chapter 4.6, where the content plan is drafted. Most of the messages sent out by the competitors are about hotel news and news in the city of The Hague. Only Hilton The Hague posts promotions and advertisements on its Facebook page, which is not the aim of the Paleis Hotel because it does not fit its vision.

4.5.2 Twitter – Instagram

Concerning Twitter, there is a big difference between the competitors of the Paleis Hotel. The Carlton Ambassador is barely using its Twitter account. Hotel des Indes is more active and tweeted 49 messages from March 2016 till March 2017. Hilton The Hague is by far the most active Twitter user with 354 tweets over the same period. The effectiveness of their tweets is hard to predict. Generally, the hotels have more followers on Facebook than on Twitter. It is remarkable to see that the hotel with the most followers, which is The Carlton Ambassador, is the one least using this platform. Whether Twitter is a useful aspect of the social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel is discussed in chapter 4.6.

The difference in use of Instagram between the competitors of the Paleis Hotel is also significant. Hilton The Hague and Hotel des Indes are actively posting messages on this social media platform, while The Carlton Ambassador does not even have an Instagram account. The photos posted by these two hotels are very professionally made and regularly posted. It probably takes them a lot of time to maintain this account. As stated in the current media audit, the Paleis Hotel does not have an Instagram account. It could take a lot of time and energy to construct and maintain an account such as two of its competitors have while the effectiveness is not really predictable. Whether it might be useful for the Paleis Hotel to use this social media platform, is covered in chapter 4.6.

4.5.3 Tripadvisor

As stated in the results section of this report, all three competitors of the Paleis Hotel score very well on Tripadvisor. Together, they are in the top three of best hotels in The Hague according to its customers. All three hotels are very consistent in replying to reviews, whether negative or positive, exactly as the Paleis Hotel does. It can be said that on this social media platform, there is not a lot that the Paleis Hotel is doing differently than its competitors. The only thing the Paleis Hotel can do to catch up on its competitors on this social media platform is to encourage customers to leave positive reviews because the frequentation of positive reviews is important for a hotel's ranking as well. The hotel already does this by sending out e-mails to customers who stayed at the hotel with the request to leave a review. It is more certainly possible to stimulate customers to leave reviews in other ways. Whether social media, like Facebook or Twitter, can be of any use in achieving this, is not likely.

It would not seem logical to promote posting reviews on Tripadvisor via Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Firstly, people following the Paleis Hotel on social media might not have been customers yet. For them, it would not make a lot of sense to post a review. Furthermore, the Paleis Hotels risks looking too eager for a high score on Tripadvisor when it starts to promote posting reviews. According to the owner of the Paleis Hotel, the hotel's social media strategy should not be only commercially driven but rather focused on building customer relations and creating some sort of customer community. It does not fit in this pattern if the hotel starts to promote for a higher score on Tripadvisor. Therefore, it is not advised to promote posting Tripadvisor reviews on social media platforms. The hotel could look for a different way to increase the amount of positive reviews but this will then not be done on social media and will thus not part of the social media strategy.

4.6 Social media content plan

In this chapter, a social media content plan for the Paleis Hotel is composed. First of all, a choice is made about which social media platform(s) the hotel should use in this content plan. Consequently, a version of the content plan is introduced and clarified.

4.6.1 Choice of social media

It seems wise for the Paleis Hotel to only use Facebook as part of its social media strategy after reviewing the results of this report. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, according to the honeycomb analysis of social media in chapter 3.5.1, Facebook offers the widest array of possibilities for companies. Remy Steijger confirms this in the interview that has been conducted with him. The owner of the hotel indicated that she would like a social media strategy that is focused on the needs of (potential) guests rather than a strategy that is commercially driven. The communication with customers is easier on Facebook than on other social media platforms. The creation of a community around the online presence of the Paleis Hotel also seems more uncomplicated. In addition, Facebook is by far the most popular social media platform with the target groups of the Paleis Hotel.

Findings from the SWOT analysis of this report stated that the use of other social media platforms than Facebook might offer new opportunities for the hotel. On the other hand, the Paleis Hotel is a small hotel with a limited amount of manpower. It will take much more time to engage in multiple social networks than concentrating only on Facebook. The hotel then risks having not enough work force, which will result in a poor execution of the content plan. Therefore, it is considered sensible to keep focused on only one social media platform, that is Facebook.

4.6.2 Template of the social media content plan and motivation

On the next page, the reader can find a template of the social media content plan for the Paleis Hotel (see figure 4.6). The template starts in week 44 of 2017, which is the first week of November. It will serve as a planning for the maintenance of the Facebook page of the hotel. The content plan suggests to post three messages per week, as advised by Remy Steijger. The messages are divided in six categories to keep the content varied and interesting. The template stops after week 51 of 2017 but can be continued in the same pattern as the weeks before.

Week		Hotel news	Events in The Hague	Restaurant in The Hague	Shop in The Hague	Funfact about The Hague	Employee presentation
44	Monday	X					
	Wednesday			X			
	Friday		X				
45	Monday	X					
	Wednesday				X		
	Friday		X				
46	Monday	X					
	Wednesday					X	
	Friday		X				
47	Monday	X					
	Wednesday						X
	Friday		X				
48	Monday	X					
	Wednesday			X			
	Friday		X				
49	Monday	X					
	Wednesday				X		
	Friday		X				
50	Monday	X					
	Wednesday					X	
	Friday		X				
51	Monday	X					
	Wednesday						X
	Friday		X				

Figure 4.6: The social media content plan

Hotel news is one of the categories in the content plan. This can be anything concerning the hotel. For instance, the acquisition of new furniture, winning an award or changes in the breakfast menu. Messages in this category give the Facebook followers of the hotel a sneak peek into the functioning and the developments of the hotel. This allows the creation of a special relationship with the followers because they will feel involved with the happenings of the hotel. The current social media audit of the Paleis Hotel (chapter 3.2 & 4.2) shows that messages about the hotel and its development are more popular. Therefore, it can be stated that followers appreciate this sort of messaging much more than advertisement for instance.

Another category is *events in The Hague*. Once a week on Friday, a message will be posted about an interesting event in The Hague in the coming weekend. This might stimulate followers to visit this event and then maybe the Paleis Hotel. Moreover, it shows the Facebook followers that The Hague is a very vibrant city. This might encourage them to visit The Hague and the hotel at a later moment. If there is not an interesting event to post a message about, this category might be used to expose a special sight of the city.

The categories *restaurant in The Hague* and *shop in The Hague* function more or less the same. Once every two weeks, a message is posted in one of these two categories. The goal is to show nice, interesting or exceptional restaurants and shops. This might stimulate Facebook followers to visit The Hague and the Paleis Hotel. Furthermore, the Paleis Hotel can encourage the exposed shops and restaurants to share its messages. This will give the Facebook page of the hotel more exposure. This can generate more followers, especially because the page will be exposed on pages of other companies in The Hague, which means that the followers of these pages might be interested in following the page of the Paleis Hotel as well.

Once every four weeks, a message out of the category *fun fact about The Hague* will be posted. This category mainly serves to amuse the Facebook followers and provide them with interesting information about the city of The Hague.

Lastly, the category *employee presentation* serves as a way to present the employees of the hotel. Once every four weeks, an employee will be introduced on the Facebook page. As the hotel news, this category gives followers a peek behind the scenes to create a feeling of involvement. Thanks to that, sustainable customer relationships can be built.

Conclusion

This report investigated the feasibility of attracting more customers to the Paleis Hotel by implementing a social media strategy. The central research question is: 'How can the Paleis Hotel attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy?'. Research has been conducted on the basis of six sub questions. This resulted in a great amount of findings, which have been analysed. The main conclusions from this analysis are elaborated in this chapter.

An interview with the owner of the Paleis Hotel showed that she would like the Paleis Hotel to be active on social media in the interest of the customers rather than being too commercially driven. The owner believes that social media can offer opportunities to reach new customers and to let them experience the hospitality that the Paleis Hotel offers. Social media can also function as a communication channel with existing customers to build sustainable relationships with them and create an online community around the hotel. The interview was conducted to gain insight into the owner's objectives of having a social media strategy. As stated in the central research question, the main goal is to attract more customers. However, it seemed relevant to attain deeper knowledge about the owner's reasons for wanting to have a social media strategy and the mission and vision of the hotel. During the interview, the owner indicated that a perfect customer service is of utmost importance to her.

It has been concluded that the Paleis Hotel should primarily send out messages about hotel news and developments and general news on social media platforms rather than commercial messages. Firstly, the current activities of the Paleis Hotel on social media were investigated. The hotel is mainly active on Facebook and TripAdvisor. Research showed that the hotel could be more engaging on Facebook because it had only sent out 29 messages from the 1st of March 2016 till the 1st of March 2017 on this particular social media platform. Research showed that messages about news and developments in the hotel are popular, next to messages about general news that is mostly about the city of The Hague. Messages that have a clear objective to sell are the least popular ones. In addition, informative messages better fit with the mission and vision of the Paleis Hotel than commercial messages.

Research showed that the size of the hotel can either be a strength or a weakness. The Paleis Hotel is a small hotel. This can be a strength because its employees can be very flexible, involved en personal in the delivery of service via social media. The smallness of the hotel can also be a weakness since there is a low budget and not a lot of manpower for social media activities. Although expanding into new social media platforms could be a great opportunity, the hotel then risks not having enough work force to remain consistent in the maintenance of its social media accounts. A considerable threat is becoming too commercial. These conclusions were drawn after a SWOT analysis was conducted.

Concerning domestic tourism, it has been decided to target three market segments that are part of the tourism marketing strategy of the municipality of The Hague as well; adventurous adults, sophisticated elderly and creative and inspiring adults. Their profiles matched perfectly with what the Paleis Hotel has to offer. Regarding international tourism, tourists from Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom were targeted because they are the biggest groups of foreign tourists coming to The Hague. Their market segments are also expected to experience the biggest growth in the coming years.

In addition, findings indicated that the three direct competitors of the Paleis Hotel are far more active on social media than the Paleis Hotel, especially on Facebook. Except Hilton The Hague, their messages were mostly informative rather than commercial. The research did not lead to any remarkable findings that could function as a source of inspiration for the social media strategy of the Paleis Hotel. Hotel des Indes has two professional introductory videos about the hotel on its Facebook page. This might be considered by the Paleis Hotel to do as well because it gives Facebook users a peek behind the scenes, which can give the hotel a positive image on this social media platform.

In conclusion, it was decided only to integrate Facebook as part of the social media strategy. Facebook is the most popular social media platform under the different target groups of the hotel. Moreover, the Paleis Hotel risks not having enough manpower to maintain multiple social media platforms. Facebook also gives companies the most marketing opportunities and means to communicate with its users. The head of marketing at Digital Captains, an online marketing company, was interviewed to give his advice. In accordance with his advice, a template content plan was made for the Paleis Hotel to implement, which can be found in chapter 4.6.

Recommendations

Research in this report showed that there are several actions that the Paleis Hotel can take to implement a coherent social media strategy. In this chapter, recommendations are given to the Paleis Hotel. These recommendations answer the central question of this report: ‘How can the Paleis Hotel attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy?’

First of all, the current social media audit showed that the Paleis Hotel is not active enough on social media at this moment. The company should be more dedicated to their use of social media. It is advised to use Facebook as primary social media platform. The Paleis Hotel risks not having enough manpower to maintain multiple social media accounts. Furthermore, Facebook offers more possibilities to reach and communicate with (potential) customers than any other social media platform. For instance, the Paleis Hotel could consider starting a like-campaign on Facebook, which creates more exposure.

Concerning domestic tourism, the recommended target group for a social media strategy are adventurous adults, sophisticated elderly and creative and inspiring adults. These three market segments that are part of the tourism marketing strategy of the municipality of The Hague as well. An elaboration of these target groups can be found in chapter 3.3.1. Regarding international tourism, the Paleis Hotel should focus on British, German and Belgian customers because they are the biggest groups of non-Dutch tourists coming to The Hague and have the highest growth potential. For all target groups, Facebook is their preferred social media platform.

It is advised that the Paleis Hotel sends out three messages a week on Facebook. These messages should be relevant and diverse. Therefore, a content plan was created as guidance for the hotel. This plan and an elaboration can be found in chapter 4.6. In regard to the competitors of the Paleis Hotel, a current social media audit about them did not provide a lot of new ideas. Hotel des Indes has two introductory videos about its hotel on its Facebook page. This might be an idea for the Paleis Hotel as well because it involves (potential) customers in the functioning of the hotel. Tripadvisor is important for the reputation of the Paleis Hotel. It should continue to stimulate customers to write a review on this website and to read these reviews, as it is already doing.

Lastly, the Paleis Hotel should continuously be aware of the fact that their behaviour on social media affects their image. Therefore, it should not send out commercial messages because this does not fit its mission and vision. By following the content plan, this can be prevented.

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Appendices

A.1 Full transcript of the interview with Marja Hillebrand, owner of the Paleis Hotel

On March 14, 2017 an interview was taken with Marja Hillebrand, who is the owner of the Paleis Hotel. The purpose of this interview was to acquire knowledge about the objectives of implementing a social media strategy at the Paleis Hotel.

Interviewer: “First of all, thank you for taking the time. My first question is: why did you want to run your own hotel?”

M. Hillebrand: “Since the age of 12, I wanted to have my own hotel. It originated from a girls dream. When my family and me went on vacation, we always passed a run-down manor where I thought you could make a beautiful hotel out of. I always dreamed about this with my father. And why I wanted to do this was, I think, because hospitality, servitude and entrepreneurship are under my skin. It started with simply working in a hotel and after that, taking on managerial functions. In these positions, I found more and more things that I would have done differently. I like to be distinctive, and I try to make the Paleis Hotel this as well. I think that also is the reason I wanted to start my own hotel. Unfortunately, there are many people in the hotel business who only work for the money. And I believe, that if you want to be rich, you should find another business to invest and work in.”

Interviewer: “So you would say that financial profit is not your main goal when running a hotel?”

M. Hillebrand: “No, it is not the main goal. Of course, I have to earn a living and pay the salaries of the employees, but it is not my main objective to become rich.”

Interviewer: “What is the main objective then? Can you explain the mission of the Paleis Hotel?”

M. Hillebrand: “The mission of the Paleis Hotel is to provide extraordinary hospitality to our customers. Our slogan is: a home away from home. And we try to create a home for both business travellers and tourists that they cannot find in other hotels.”

Interviewer: “That is clear, thanks. Does the Paleis Hotel also have a long-term strategy, a vision so to speak?”

M. Hillebrand: “The long-term strategy is to become the best hotel in The Hague, at which we are quite close with a place in the top three at Tripadvisor. We also want to become one of the best hotels in the Netherlands in our category. Our main focus on this is what the customers think rather than what our competitors or paid booking-sites think of us. Tripadvisor is an independent rating website where the customers can give their opinion and that our main criteria.”

Interviewer: “You talked about the best hotel in our category. What do you consider the category the Paleis Hotel is in?”

M. Hillebrand: “Small hotels are our category.”

Interviewer: “You asked me to think about creating and implementing a social media strategy. What are your motives for wanting this?”

M. Hillebrand: “Currently, the Paleis Hotel has some activity on social media. The responsibility for this is mine. But as an entrepreneur, I do not have a lot of time to think about what would be interesting for our customers to see on social media. It has never been thought of as a strategy because I believe you cannot just say ‘I want to do something with Facebook’ for example. I think you really have to consider this carefully. I also have to admit that I was quite reluctant to start with social media because I do not think that it is very personal while personal service is our main mission. That is why I wanted you to take a look at this and determine personal ways to use social media because on the other hand, you cannot really block it since it is very popular in this time and age.”

Interviewer: “Okay, so you think it is very important that the mission of Paleis Hotel comes back in its social media strategy. What is the principal sort of coverage that covers this mission, according to you?”

M. Hillebrand: ‘‘I believe it has to be about communication. Portraying what is happening in the hotel via social media. When people come here, they experience a special sort of hospitality. But before they come here, there are a lot of steps to be taken. So if you lower these steps by showing customers what to expect, you create an effective form of promotion and customer relationships. We do not have high marketing budgets like the big hotel chains. We, therefore, need to communicate a personal message that makes the customer feel like they are part of our hotel.

We need them to feel engaged, which creates a certain form of goodwill. A small part of our strategy will be commercial, but the majority is about customer relations. Social media therefore does not need to be a commercial selling place.’’

Interviewer: ‘‘According to you, what can be the pitfalls when creating a social media strategy?’’

M. Hillebrand: ‘‘I should be careful not to make it too commercial by saying, for example, we only have three rooms left for tonight, book now. We are not a shop; we do not sell a product or service but an experience. We have to make it more humane and something customers would want to belong to, which is also the power of social media I believe.’’

Interviewer: ‘‘So the most important thing is keeping the mission visible in the social media strategy. My last question is something different, where do you see yourself and the Paleis Hotel in five years?’’

M. Hillebrand: ‘‘In five years, I want the hotel to be renovated. There are a few things that still need to be installed and fixed to create the most wonderful experiences for our guests. I think that our service is perfect but we can still improve the hardware of the hotel. In five years, I think we have to be the best hotel in The Hague and one of the best in the Netherlands. Personally, I think I will not only be the owner of the Paleis Hotel anymore. I look forward to eventually expanding this hotel or starting another hotel at a different location. I do not have a clear strategy for this yet, but the most important thing is that the Paleis Hotel and I will greatly advance in five years.’’

A.2 Full transcript of the interview with Remy Steijger, marketing director at Digital Captains

On April 14, 2017 an interview was taken with Remy Steijger, who is the marketing director at Digital Captains, a digital marketing company. The purpose of this interview was to acquire knowledge about effective behaviour on social media.

Interviewer: “First of all, thank you for taking the time. I have already decided what target groups to focus on with my social media strategy. In the Netherlands, the focus will mainly be on adventurous and wealthy adults and the elderly who are interested in trendy places and culture. Concerning foreign tourists, I am not planning to focus on certain demographics or income groups but rather at all sorts of customers from neighbouring countries, namely Germany, Belgium and the UK.”

R. Steijger: “Did you know that it is possible to reach potential customers via Facebook by giving it the e-mail addresses of customers how have already been to the Paleis hotel? Facebook looks at the interests of these customers [if they have a Facebook account] and with this information, they can provide you with a new group of potential customers. There is a big chance that these potential customers are highly interested in coming to the Paleis Hotel. This is called a lookalike audience. It is also very cheap, in my opinion.”

Interviewer: “That is very interesting. Thank you for the tip. You started talking about Facebook immediately. Do you think that it the most important social media platform to focus on?”

R. Steijger: “Yes, indeed. Facebook has the biggest amount of users and people from all ages use this platform. Moreover, firms really have to possibility to look into the demographics and interests of the users on Facebook. If you would ask me, it is by far the most important social media platform. You could also decide to add Instagram, which is part of Facebook and works greatly together with it. Therefore, you do not have to have an Instragram account to advertise on this platform.”

Interviewer: “At the moment, the Paleis Hotel does not have an Instagram account. Maybe it is useful to create one in the future?”

R. Steijger: “Well, that really depends on what you are planning to do with it. If you post something once a month for example, it is not useful at all.”

Interviewer: “That is good to keep in mind. Is this the same with Facebook? How much does one need to post to make a profile attractive for users?”

R. Steijger: “The most important thing is that whatever you post should be interesting content. On Facebook, it is better to post something interesting three times a year than something boring five times a day. Each message you post needs to trigger user engagement, which results in even more users seeing your message. There is not really a rule about how many messages one should post on Facebook but I would say three times a week at least. But be beware that these should not be commercial because that does not really work.”

Interviewer: “Luckily, the Paleis Hotel does not have a commercial aim on social media. They will rather use it for customer relations and community creating.”

R. Steijger: “If you decide later on to become more commercial on Facebook, then it is better to post these sort of messages via advertising.”

Interviewer: “If you want to reach customers living in different countries, I would assume to post all the messages in English. Or is it advisable to post it multiple times in different languages?”

R. Steijger: “These days, you can post the same message in different language. The user will then see it in his or her first language. Facebook has its own translator, but it does not work perfectly so I would translate it.”

Interviewer: “That would be very convenient. You said before that the quality of posts is more important than the quantity of posts. How do you translate that into something real?”

R. Steijger: “It is very important to include visual material, like a photo or a video. Messages with only text are not that appealing to users.”

Interviewer: “How do you trigger Facebook users to ‘like’ your page?”

R. Steijger: “You could start a like-campaign on Facebook. It is then important that you target the right users on Facebook, users that potentially are interested in the Paleis Hotel. With this, you can stimulate engagement.”

Interviewer: “Do you have an idea about staying relevant and interesting on social media on the long run?”

R. Steijger: “Yes, I personally use an Excel-file. In this file, I created several categories and subcategories. You can then decide for yourself how much you will post about one category per week or per month. At the Paleis Hotel, categories could be ‘internal’ and ‘external’ with external subcategories such as ‘restaurants in The Hague’ and ‘monuments in The Hague’. With this, you can force yourself to post diverse content with different subjects. Diversity is very important.”

Interviewer: “There are also programs with which you can plan an insert your posts on beforehand, right?”

R. Steijger: “That is true. I personally make use of RSDM, which is software program I created myself. With this program, you can plan posts and get information about the popularity of your behaviour on social media.”

Interviewer: “This might be interesting for the Paleis Hotel as well. I think that I have asked all I needed to know. Thank you again for your time.”

R. Steijger: “You are welcome.”

A.3 Student ethics form

ES4 Guide for Final Project and Dissertation Second semester 2016-2017

Appendix 6.3 – Student Ethics Form

European Studies Student Ethics Form

Your name: D. Ton

Supervisor: W.J.M. van Leeuwen

Instructions/checklist

Before completing this form you should read the APA Ethics Code (<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>). If you are planning research with human subjects you should also look at the sample consent form available in the Final Project and Dissertation Guide.

- a. ☐ Read section 3 that your supervisor will have to sign. Make sure that you cover all these issues in section 1.
- b. ☐ Complete sections 1 and, if you are using human subjects, section 2, of this form, and sign it.
- c. ☐ Ask your project supervisor to read these sections (and the draft consent form if you have one) and sign the form.
- d. ☐ Append this signed form as an appendix to your dissertation.

Section 1. Project Outline (to be completed by student)

(i) **Title of Project:** Social media strategy – Paleis Hotel

(ii) **Aims of project:** Research about how the Paleis Hotel can attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy.

(iii) **Will you involve other people in your project – e.g. via formal or informal interviews, group discussions, questionnaires, Internet surveys etc. (Note: if you are using data that has already been collected by another researcher – e.g. recordings or transcripts of conversations given to you by your supervisor, you should answer 'NO' to this question.)**

☒ YES ☐ NO

If no: you should now sign the statement below and return the form to your supervisor. You have completed this form.

This project is not designed to include research with human subjects. I understand that I do not have ethical clearance to interview people (formally or informally) about the topic of my research, to carry out Internet research (e.g. on chat rooms or discussion boards) or in any other way to use people as subjects in my research.

Student's signature  - date 06-09

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If yes: you should complete the rest of this form.

Section 2 Complete this section only if you answered YES to question (iii) above.

(i) What will the participants have to do? (v. brief outline of procedure):

I will hold an interview with two participants individually and they will have to answer to my questions.

(ii) What sort of people will the participants be and how will they be recruited?

I will interview Marja Hillebrand, the owner of the Paleis Hotel and Remy Steijger, marketing director at Digital Captains.

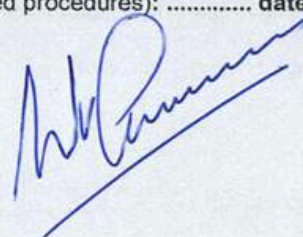
(iii) What sort stimuli or materials will your participants be exposed to, tick the appropriate boxes and then state what they are in the space below?

Questionnaires[]; Pictures[]; Sounds []; Words[]; Other[Questions].

(iv) Consent: Informed consent must be obtained for all participants before they take part in your project. Either verbally or by means of an informed consent form you should state what participants will be doing, drawing attention to anything they could conceivably object to subsequently. You should also state how they can withdraw from the study at any time and the measures you are taking to ensure the confidentiality of data. A standard informed consent form is available in the Dissertation Manual.

(vi) What procedures will you follow in order to guarantee the confidentiality of participants' data? Personal data (name, addresses etc.) should not be stored in such a way that they can be associated with the participant's data.

Student's signature:  date: 06.09.2017

Supervisor's signature (if satisfied with the proposed procedures):  date: 07.09.2017

A.3 Informed consent forms

2016-
2017

Appendix 6.4 – Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

- 1) Project Title: Social media strategy – Paleis Hotel
- 2) Project Description: Research about how the Paleis Hotel can attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy.

If you agree to take part in this study please read the following statement and sign this form.

I am 16 years of age or older.

I can confirm that I have read and understood the description and aims of this research. The researcher has answered all the questions that I had to my satisfaction.

I agree to the audio recording of my interview with the researcher.

I understand that the researcher offers me the following guarantees:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. My name will not be used in the study unless I give permission for it.

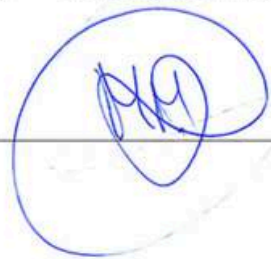
Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name: Marja Hillebrand
Position: Owner of the Paleis Hotel

Signed: _____



Date: _____

8/9/17

2016-
2017

Appendix 6.4 – Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

- 1) Project Title: Social media strategy – Paleis Hotel
- 2) Project Description: Research about how the Paleis Hotel can attract more customers by implementing a social media strategy.

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Recordings will be accessible only by the researcher. Unless otherwise agreed, anonymity will be ensured at all times. Pseudonyms will be used in the transcriptions.

I can ask for the recording to be stopped at any time and anything to be deleted from it.

I consent to take part in the research on the basis of the guarantees outlined above.

Name: Remy Steijger
Position: Marketing director at Digital Captains

Signed:  Date: 11-9-2017