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# THESIS REPORT

THE APPROACH OF AN ONLINE REVIEW MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



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# **Bachelor Thesis Report**

Saxion University of Applied Sciences  
Hotel Management

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## **The approach of an online review management strategy**

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## Declaration of own work statement

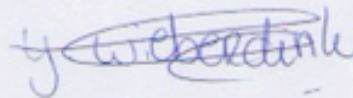
I hereby declare that:

- I am fully informed about the Thesis C assessment criteria;
- all the work I have conducted to fulfill these criteria is entirely my own;
- I have not been assisted by any other person, except the coaching offered within HBS guidelines.

Name: Yvette Wieberdink

Date: 17-06-2019

Signature:



## FOREWORD

Dear reader,

This bachelor thesis report is written by me, Yvette Wieberdink (Wieberdink, 2019). I am a Hotel Management student at the Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands. In order to finalize the University, it is required to conduct a bachelor thesis report. This report is a mandatory part of the education and is conducted in combination with an internship. The aim of the thesis is to individually develop an advice into a strategic management plan for the client.

This thesis report is written for the client Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Brisbane, Australia. In August 2018 I moved to Australia to work as a marketing trainee and to write a thesis about advising an online review management for the client since the company is facing a poor online reputation. This is because of the high amount of negative online reviews the company receives. Unfortunately, due to some personal circumstances, I was not able to stay in Australia and I had to go back to the Netherlands. In February 2019 I restarted to write the thesis until June 2019.

In collaboration with my supervisor Tara Eller, the marketing manager of Apollo, I have formulated the management question. This question is focusing on how Apollo can manage their online reviews in order to improve the online reputation and increase in sales. Nowadays online reviews are of major importance for businesses and since I am traveling a lot and personally write many online reviews, this topic took my interest.

Based on the literature review and conducting interviews with experts out of the tourism industry I received more insight into an online review management strategy. I was able to answer the research questions due to the theoretical framework and the interviews. The results of the research questions provided an input for the advisory part of the thesis. In the advisory part, I have implemented an online review management strategy how Apollo can manage their online reviews.

During the process of writing my thesis I have received a lot of support from many people. There are a few who I would like to mention. First of all, my first examiner Tatiana Alekseeva. She has supported me through the difficult times and she always gave me right words of support which boosted my self-esteem. Next to it, I would like to say thanks to my manager Tara Eller. In the time I was working in Australia she always took care of me and together with her we have found the right solution for me to go back to the Netherlands. Even if we are on distance, she has always supported me and besides she always gave me the feeling, like Tatiana Alekseeva, that she believed in my abilities. Furthermore, I would like to say thanks to Sophie van der Broecke. I have had some appointments with her to speak about my situation and after all I always had a boost of motivation. Last but not lastly, I would like to say thanks to Erik Pakkert taking the time to coach me during the last difficult month until the deadline. Even though I have experienced some difficult moments, I have worked with full of enthusiasm on this report. This is because the subject motivated me and the sweet support I received from friends, family, my boyfriend and the three people mentioned before.

Yvette Wieberdink

Amsterdam, June 2019

## Executive summary

This thesis assignment has been corrected based on the feedback of the first and second examiner. The changes have been adjusted with a red font style. The improvements have been mainly applied in the research and advisory part. The statements of the interviews to the research questions are shortened.

The aim of this thesis assignment is to advice an online review management strategy for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in order to solve its management problem on having no structure on managing online reviews. The client is facing a poor online reputation due to the high amount of negative reviews which influences the sales as well. Therefore, this project provides an answer to the following management question;

*‘What is the best way for Apollo Motorhome Holidays to manage their online reviews to improve their online reputation and increase in bookings?’*

Several steps have been taken in order to answer the management question. First of all, this thesis assignment consists of qualitative field research meaning that the researcher (Wieberdink, 2019) conducted interviews with experts, reviewers and an employee of the client. The different data collection methods are called triangulation and is used in order to obtain in-depth information into an ORM strategy. The aim of the interviews with the reviewers is to get insight into their motives of writing online reviews which is useful for the advisory part. The interviews with the experts and the client are compared with each other in order to evaluate the client’s areas of successes and improvements. The methods of the research include the 13 interviews and a literature review in order to get insight into an ORM strategy. The research questions are answered and based on the results of the interviews and the theoretical framework.

The aim of the advisory part is to improve the client’s online reputation and increase in sales. In order to realize this, it is advisable to implement the ORM strategy from the beginning. This strategy is based on the ORM model, which is presented in appendix III, figure III.I. To effectively manage online reviews, it is advisable to follow the five aspects within the model. These aspects were investigated through conducting interviews with experts and reviewers. The aim was to formulate for each aspect an alternative which makes an effectively and suitable ORM strategy for the client.

Before conducting the ORM strategy, the first approach is to focus on the appropriate review platforms. The client should focus on the major aggregators; TripAdvisor, Google reviews and Facebook since it is facing a poor online reputation on these platforms. The first step of conducting the ORM strategy is creating remarkable experience in which Apollo have to make their service personalized by providing a personalized small amenity in the campervan. The following step is to ask for reviews during the check-out process and encourage consumers through e-mail after two days of their stay. This increases the quantity of reviews on the review platforms. The third step is to respond to all the reviews in a professional and personalized manner within 24 hours. All the reviews should be monitored by an online community manager who is responsible for managing online reviews through a software tool. This software tool provides an additional feature which reduces the amount of negative reviews. This feature is a survey for internal use. Finally, the online reviews should be communicated within a team to discover the areas of improvements and successes. This advice is implemented by the means of the PDCA-cycle.

## List of abbreviations

ATL	Apollo Tourism & Leisure
ORM	Online Review Management
CRQ	Central research question
SQ	Sub-question

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## 1. Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis provides a general introduction. Firstly, the background information of the client is introduced. Secondly, the relevance of the project is discussed. Subsequently, the objective of the advice and research are described including the advice- and research questions. Lastly, the reading guide describes the structure of the following chapters.

### 1.1 The client

The client related to this thesis assignment is Apollo Motorhome Holidays, shortly mentioned Apollo. It is a multi-national provider of motorhome rental in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Canada, Ireland, United Kingdom and Germany. The head office is located in Brisbane, Australia. The company started a division of Apollo Tourism & Leisure (ATL). This is a multi-national manufacturer, rental fleet operator, wholesaler and retailer including motorhomes, campervans and caravans. Apollo's mission is to be the global recreational vehicle (RV) solution for today's self-drive traveler.

Apollo indicates a certain grow during the last years. After a couple of years in the rental business the company was aware of the need and demand of buying the rental vehicles. (personal conversation with Jessica Adams). Apollo decided to enter into the retail market by selling second hand vehicles and expanded their business in the seven mentioned countries. Apollo is aiming to expand their business in the following years. From December 2017 to December 2018 the company made a profit of \$14,714,000, in December 2017 it was \$15,957,000 (ApolloTourism, 2019). The difference in profit may be the investments the company have made. However, Apollo is operating in a high growth environment due to the trend of traveling with campervans (CNBC, 2017). This occurs especially in Australia where this method of travelling has gained importance in the last years. Travelers of all ages are looking into purchasing or renting their campervan. This group want to find a quick way to make their purchase decisions and start to read online travel reviews prior booking (Trustyou, 2016). Apollo is aware of this trend and started to be concerned about its poor online reputation due to the high amount of negative online reviews. The management noticed that there is no structure about managing their online reviews and is convinced that it is one of the main reasons their online reviews are negatively impacted. Next to it, the company is concerned about customers purchasing at their competitors since they have a positive online reputation which impact the sales of Apollo.

### 1.2 Relevance of the project

Negative online reviews have a negative impact on the purchase decisions of consumers (Marchant, 2017). According to a study of BrightLocal (2017), businesses that faces a high amount of negative reviews can drive away 40% of their potential customers. This means that companies should take care of their online presence since it influences the online reputation and the sales. Indeed, there is a connection between online reviews, online reputation and sales. In fact, prior research has confirmed that the total number of online reviews leads to higher sales and a better online reputation (Amblee & Bui, 2011; Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli, Sadhya, 2018). According to the results of the research from Ye's, Law's and Gu's (in Nguyen, 2015), positive online reviews can improve 10% in reviewers' rating which increase the sales by 4.4%. Hence, managing online reviews effectively are likely to help to increase businesses. The relevance of this project to the client is the impact of negative reviews on their online reputation and sales.

This study offers insight in an ORM strategy since online reviews are nowadays of major importance. Companies should implement a solid online review management strategy in order to boost their online reputation and so the sales. However, according to previous studies, 85% of travel companies, such as hotels and tour operators, do not have guidelines to manage their online reviews (Barsky & Frame, in Nguyen, 2015) with a consequence of a poor online reputation. This is also what the client of this thesis report recognizes. The management of the client has no structure approach how to manage their online reviews. As a result, a high amount of negative online reviews. Additionally, to reduce the

negative reviews companies should provide their consumers a remarkable experience (Nguyen, 2015). Apollo is not aware of creating this wow-effect towards their customers and how it influences their negative reviews. They might think the company is doing well but the negative reviews are the evidence of having a poor service.

Apollo is aiming to reduce their negative reviews and to improve their online presence. This project advises an online review management strategy in order to provide recommendations to the clients' requirements. This thesis assignment examines how Apollo should manage their online reviews in order to achieve a better online reputation and increase in bookings. Hence, there will be focused on online reviews and not on online reputation management as a whole. Online reputation Management (ORM) deals with everything about a company's brand in the online community (Campbell, 2019). It also involves blogs, social media and forums. Those components are not relevant for this report due to lack of time of the researcher.

### 1.3 Objective of the advisory plan

The management problem of the client involves having no structure approach about managing their online reviews. As a consequence, a high amount of negative online reviews that damages the online reputation of the client and so the sales. Derived from the problem statement the following management question have been formulated:

*"What is the best way for Apollo Motorhome Holidays to manage their online reviews to improve their online reputation and increase in bookings?"*

The following goal is set to provide an answer to the question; the objective of the advisory part is to advice an online review management strategy to improve the online reputation of Apollo Motorhome Holidays. As mentioned in paragraph 1.2, companies need a solid online review management (ORM) strategy to boost their online reputation and sales. An ORM strategy allows a company to manage and monitor their online reviews to understand the customers' feedback. It discovers the need of improvements and creates favorable sentiments in case of taking action. The ORM strategy reduces the high amount of negative online reviews if companies work persistent with online reviews.

The ORM strategy plan will be presented in the advisory part. The advisory plan consists of the following elements:

1. Online review management (ORM) strategies
2. Criteria of the strategies
3. Implementation plan
4. Financial implications

The first part provides an overview of an alternative set of ORM strategies. This is based on the results of literature review and interviews. In the following chapter the strategies will be analyzed through a criterion to select the most appropriate strategy. The third part explains the implementation plan of the most suitable strategy by means of the PDCA-cycle. Finally, the advisory plan results in an overview of the financial implications of the strategy chosen.

Research have to be conducted to provide a meaningful advice. The following chapter explains the objective of the research and the related research questions.

### 1.4 Objective of the research

The objective *within* the research is to get insight in the guidelines of effectively managing online reviews to provide recommendations about conducting an ORM strategy.

The objective *of* the research is to contribute an improved online reputation for Apollo Motorhome Holidays by gaining knowledge about an online review management strategy.

Derived from the objectives the following two central research questions and sub-questions have been formulated:

**CRQ1: What makes an online review management strategy?**

**SQ1.1: Which tools are required to process online reviews?**

SQ1.2: What motives consumers to write online reviews?

SQ1.3: What are the tactics to respond to online reviews?

**CRQ2: What are the best practices in online review management?**

SQ2.1: Which tools are required to reduce the amount of negative online reviews?

SQ2.2: Who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy?

SQ2.3: What are the financial implications of an online review management strategy?

### 1.5 Reading guide

This thesis report consists of eight chapters. Every chapter starts with a short introduction which explains the content of it. The theoretical framework is presented in chapter two which describes the importance of online reviews nowadays and the exciting theory among the core concept, online review management. Chapter three explains the research methodology in which the research strategy is presented. Followed by chapter four, which provides an answer to the research sub-questions based on the research results. Chapter five, the research conclusion, provides an answer to the two central research questions. Chapter six explains the research discussion where the terms validity and reliability are discussed. Finally, chapter seven, which is of major importance, is the advice to the client. This chapter involves the proposed online review management strategy by means of an implementation plan. This thesis report ends in chapter eight which is the afterword.

## 2. Theoretical framework

**This chapter begins with the importance of online reviews and online reputation followed by the core concept of this study and the related theory among the concept.**

### 2.1 Online reviews and online reputation

“Online reviews are consumers’ opinions and experiences regarding a specific brand, product or service” (Klassen, 2009 & Lee, 2008, as cited in Nguyen, 2015). In other words, an online review is online feedback from consumers about their purchased product or services. According to the researcher’s opinion, it describes the usage situations and experiences of a user’s perspective. It also might involve information that the company is unwilling to mention. So, online reviews influence the purchase decision of potential customers since a negative online review has a stronger impact on a customer’s product or service evaluation than the positive message which impacts the average star rating of the company as well. Lee, Park, & Han (2007) confirm that online reviews consist of two roles: (1) provide information about product and services. (2) Serve as recommendations. This means that online reviews might help to improve the company’s successes, but also inform the potential consumers about the company’s brand. Hence, it can be said that online reviews are written by customers who experienced the product or service and provide recommendations for potential buyers and to the company on review platforms or social media channels.

Online reviews and online reputation seem to have the function, but there is a difference between the terms. Online reviews are a part of online reputation and are willing to influence the online presence of a company. These reviews are placed on different platforms that influence the online reputation a business. According to Campbell (2019), “Online reputation is the effort to influence what and how people think of a brand or person” “It deals with everything about a company’s brand in the online community. It involves blogs, social media and forums”. The definition clarifies that online reputation involves more than only managing online reviews since it also involves blogs. According to the researcher’s opinion, these blogs might be written by influencers who experienced the product or services and share it with its target group. However, Couzin, Gradiiva & Grappone (2014) clarifies that the goal is to understand the feedback about a business and taking an active role to communicate with those to discover their need of improvements that will create new business initiatives that encourages favorable sentiment. In other words, online reputation is about to improve the company’s brand based on the received feedback from its customers. The researcher is convinced that companies need to implement a clear strategy in order to process the feedback within the company, so that the barriers will be improved and showed to (potential) customers. That is what the authors means with favorable sentiment.

Online reviews are an important source of information for travelers researching where to go and what/which operators to book (Khan, 2019). According to a recent survey by Podium, 93% of customers say that their purchase decisions are influenced through online reviews. 82% do read online reviews before making a purchase decision and 60% of the consumers analyses online reviews on a weekly basis. Further, the study declares that two-thirds of consumers (68%) are willing to pay up to 15% more for the same product or service if they are assured that they will have a better experience. Clearly, online reviews are taking a significant role in a customer’s purchase decision process since they rely on it. This means that companies should put attention to their online presence since online reviews became an integral part of the online shopping experience.

Managing online reviews effectively are likely to improve the online reputation and increase business. These results are confirmed by a respondent in the study of Nguyen (2015) clarifying that their sales increased by 26% by paying attention to their online reviews. Another respondent shows that their customers picked their services due to their good reviews on TripAdvisor. As a result, 75–80% from their customers choose their business due to the positive online reputation. It can be said that positive

online reviews increase sales. From this perspective, it makes sense for business to pay attention to their online reviews. The quantity and the content of reviews are of importance as well since customers inventing detailed information. 82% of consumers purchased a product or service based on the content (Fullerton, 2017). This means that companies should encourage their customers to write an online review about their experiences since purchase decisions are based on star rating, quantity and quality of reviews.

To summarize, it is of major importance that companies pay attention to their online reviews since it impacts the online reputation and the sales. In order to do that, business need guidelines to manage their online reviews. This has led to the core concept online review management and is discussed in [paragraph 2.2](#).

## 2.2 Core concept

Since the purpose of this report is to advise an online review management strategy, it has been determined that the core concept of this study is online review management. However, limited theory is available among this topic because it is fairly new and upcoming, only Couzin (in Nguyen, 2015) defined online review management. The author's definition is as follows: "Online review management (ORM) is a function of online reputation management in which companies practice certain guidelines to understand public opinions about their brands and take an active role to attain favorable sentiments."

The definition confirms that online reviews are a part of online reputation management. As mentioned in [paragraph 2.1](#), online reviews can be defined as online feedback written by customers who experienced the product or service of the company. These reviews influence the online reputation of a business meaning that the online presence needs to be positive in order to attract potential customers and to keep the current consumers satisfied by replying to their feedback. As a result, customers are feeling noticed and will be satisfied. This is what Nguyen (2015) means with attaining favorable sentiments. However, in order to manage online reviews in a proper way, companies should implement a solid online review management strategy in order to discover their needs of improvements or successes. The guidelines in the definition of Nguyen (2015) can be translated into implementing a strategy.

### 2.2.1 Research method

Sources such as Google Scholar, Google Books and HBO-kennisbank have been used to map out the definition of the core concept and the existing insights. By using these search engines, usable articles have emerged through applying the following search terms: online reviews, online review management, online review management strategy, online travel reviews, and online consumer reviews. An overview of the search methods is presented in appendix I. The sources within this study are examined by means of the AAOC-criteria (Appendix II).

## 2.3 Existing insights

**This chapter describes the existing theory related to the core concept.**

### 2.3.1 Online Review Management (ORM) model

Due to the limited theory available among online review management, only Nguyen (2015) developed a model related to an online review management strategy (Appendix III, figure III.I). This model is used as a foundation for the guidelines to manage online reviews. According to Nguyen (2015), there are five aspects which makes an online review management strategy; (1) creating a remarkable guest experience, (2) encouraging online reviews, (3) monitoring online reviews, (4) responding to online reviews, and (5) acting upon attained information. Three aspects such as star rating, the quality and quantity of reviews are added to the model since the authors Erskine (2007), Andersen (n.d.) and Lee,

park & Han (2007) confirm the importance of the terms within an online review management. However, the operationalization of the core concept is based on the ORM model of Nguyen (2015) and the three mentioned aspects. This model is presented in appendix III, figure III.II.

The approach of the model is as follows. First of all, a company's reputation is based on the customer's experience. Therefore, having a proactive approach by creating unforgettable experience is an effective method to influence favorable sentiments which gains positive reviews and avoid negative reviews. In order to do that, companies should amuse their guests from the start of their stay, seeking for real-time feedback during and ensuring that all problems they mention are resolved before departure (Nguyen, 2015). Encouraging customers to post online reviews is a part of the proactive approach. The number of bookings affects booking intentions. Next to it, a large amount of reviews indicates the popularity and trustworthy of the company which gives prospect customers information for their purchase decisions. In order to boost online reviews, companies must ask for reviews via emails or during the check-out process. The proactive approach is mainly based of increasing the chance of attaining online favorable sentiments. However, a company must listen to the feedback of their customers. Businesses may think that they have done well, but their customers can have another opinion. Awareness of guest opinions is of major importance in online review management where companies need to monitor and attract new online reviews. The third step of the model is monitoring online reviews which give the company an opportunity to discover barriers for improvement. In order to do that, the business must identify review sites where they want to focus on. Next to it, a system needs to be developed to track online reviews in which an employee or team carry out the tasks. After understanding what has been said about the company, the following step is to respond to the online reviews. The first reactive approach is to respond to the feedback. According to Nguyen (2015), all reviews should be responded in a positive, professional and personalized manner. The author explains how companies should either respond to negative reviews: "thank you for guest' business and review, an apology for shortcomings, an explanation for inconsistent performance, and a discussion of corrective actions and improvement." Finally, after monitoring and tracking new online reviews, a company must listen and understand to the customers' feedback.

The acting upon stage is developed to analyze the company's successes and need of improvement.

First of all, ensure that customers can leave their feedback about a company on a review platform. "Online review sites publish reviews about the business, products or services and the main audience are consumers seeking information for purchase decision making" (Nguyen, 2015). This means that companies have to be aware on how many review platforms their business is as well as their average star rating. Nguyen (2015), Andersen (n.d.), and Erskine (2017) recommend four reliable online review platforms: TripAdvisor, Google, Yelp and Facebook.

**TripAdvisor** is the world largest travel site that focuses on reviews of 7.3 million accommodations, hotels, attractions, and restaurants. According to TripAdvisor's last published financial report (TripAdvisor, 2017), their travel content involves 600 million reviews and opinions and contains 455 million unique users even during their seasonal peak.

**Google Reviews** appears after the search method has been entered on the search engine. Google Reviews are posted on Google Maps where the reviewer can publish reviews of the places they have been. These reviews and opinions are voluntary. Google do not ask reviewers or business to pay for their reviews (Google). All the reviews are public so everyone can see what the reviewer has written. Anonymous reviews cannot be added. Reviews can be removed if others label them as incorrect or if they do not comply with Google's review policies.

**Yelp** is also a popular online review site and contains a wide range of local business. Yelp has an average of 33 million mobile app unique users and 69 million web unique visitors (Yelp). 80% of

searches on Yelp were done on a mobile device and 69% reviews were generated on mobile devices in December 2018.

**Facebook** is one of the top five sites that consumers analyze before they purchase from a business (Penaflorida, 2018). According to the author; “Most people today have a personal Facebook Account, and it only makes sense to allow users to leave their reviews of a business on the same platform.” Facebook created a new system which makes the review process simpler for users. The system is called recommendations and provides more details than traditional reviews. This means that there will be no longer any star rating, but customers will rate business simply by choosing whether or not recommend it.

Businesses need a certain amount of reviews on their review platforms to show up in local searches. Next to it, to improve the online reputation, it is of major importance that business receives qualitative reviews with an optimum average rating. This involves the quantity, quality and star rating of online reviews. Based on the literature review, these three aspects are not involved into the model of Nguyen (2015).

“An effect of implementing an effect online review management strategy is that business start to accumulate hundreds or thousands of online reviews” (Erskine, 2017). The quantity of reviews involves the amount of reviews a company need to attract the attention of reviewers. How many reviews a company need depends on the review sites. Google reviews for instance need at least five Google reviews for the star rating to show up in local searches (Andersen, n.d.). Next to it, companies need to receive constantly recent reviews for a customer to trust a review. If It is older than six months, the consumer do not trust it. So, the more recent reviews a company contains, the better it is for their local searches.

The quality of reviews is based on the length of the reviews. According to Lee, Park and Han (2007), an online review includes a title, content and the reviewer’s name. The authors mention that the length of reviews can affect the information quality and quantity. In order to get high-quality reviews, companies should get consistently more reviews (Andersen, n.d.). This means that companies should encourage their customers to write qualitative reviews. The quality of reviews can be damaged due to dishonest reviews that tend to inflate the quality of product or services (Nguyen, 2015). This problem has become twice as big in terms of online reputation damage.

Star rating contains the average of how a consumer experienced the business. According to Andersen (n.d.), “Star rating is the most important aspect of a review for customers”. The author clarifies that when a company’s star rating is below three stars on the search engines or website they are using, customers will seek for competitors with a better star rating. The author demonstrates the minimum star rating consumers wants to see:

- 5 stars – 8 percent said they won’t use a business if it does not have a five-star rating
- 4 stars – 37 percent want to see a four-star rating
- 3 stars – 42 percent won't purchase from a business with fewer than three stars
- 2 stars – 9 percent will use a business with as low as a two-star rating
- 1 star – Only 5 percent of consumers will use a business with a one-star rating

It does not mean that a star rating has to be perfect, but companies need at least a three-star average rating for consumers to trust and purchase from their business. Erskine (2017) point out that a solid online review management strategy results in an authentic 4 and 5-star reviews from happy customers that generates more business.

There is a cohesion between the terms star rating and the quantity and quality of reviews. In order to receive high-qualitative reviews, companies must constantly ask for more reviews (quantity of reviews). These two factors influence the star rating. The quantity of reviews says something about the number of reviews a company needs before the star rating is visible on local searches while the quality of reviews contains the content and says something about the experience of the reviewer. This will be expressed in an average, the star rating.

But how to motivate reviewers to write an online review? Start sending out emails is the answer of Anderson (n.d.), Nguyen (2015) and Erskine (2017). Nguyen (2015) point out to ask for reviews without commercial incentive whereas Erskine (2017) advises to consider rewards for reviewing for instance, offering a coupon or set up a competition where customers have a chance to win. In case of using the email approach without commercial incentive, it is of major importance to collect email addresses so that the emails can be sent out (Anderson, n.d.). This is according to Erskine (2017) a long-lasting process and not a long-term, scalable solution. The author advises to use a review management software that allows companies to direct their customers via email to the review platform(s) of their choice. "Only a percentage of your customers will review, so this is a pure numbers game. The more you ask, the more you get".

Companies need to follow up their online reviews. This means that besides focusing on receiving more reviews, they also have to reply to their reviews to let consumers know they appreciate their feedback. There are some discussions related to the respond strategies. Some authors are convinced to respond to all reviews while some suggests responding to any negative online reviews and some positives.

Abramova et al. (2015) (in Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli & Sadhya, 2018) explored three response strategies for online complaint; confession/apology, denial and excuse. The confession/apology phase provides messages and helps to alleviate a conflict situation. The denial strategy has a negative impact on trust perceptions towards customers. In this case it is better to not respond because managers disagree with the reviewer about what is being said. The excuse strategy has a positive impact on the trust customers' perceptions. Important is that the company ask for an explanation for what has happened and find solutions in order to resolve the issue. Hereby the company shows their responsibility for the problem which create trustworthy to potential customers. While Nguyen (2015) clarifies that a company should answer to all their online reviews, Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli & Sadhya (2018) shows that one respond strategy is required. According to the authors, a strategic customer orientation strategy (SCO) has a stronger impact on a company's performance than a full response strategy (FRS). The SCO strategy forces a company to respond to extreme comments which means the online reviews with the lowest and highest ratings.

The difference of the above mentioned respond strategies is that Nguyen (2015) describes how companies should answer to their reviews whereas Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli & Sadhya (2018) and Abramova, Shavanova, Fuhrer, Krasnova, & Buxmann (2015) clarifies which respond strategy is appropriate to implement. According to Nguyen (2015), it is required to respond to all online reviews whereas Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli & Sadhya (2018) and Abramova, Shavanova, Fuhrer, Krasnova, & Buxmann (2015) clarifies that a company must apply one respond strategy.

Lastly, Erskine (2017) mentioned that responding to reviews are more important for the masses than for the individual the company is replying to. The author is convinced to reply in a short, polite way that shows the customers their feedback has been taken seriously. Besides, "it reminds the customer that there are human being behind the company". Both manners have an impact on the purchase decisions of potential customers when weighing their options. Different authors have different opinions about how to respond to online reviews. This is an interesting discussion which encourages the student to gain more in-depth information by conducting interviews with experts. This will be discussed in chapter 3.



After responding to the guest reviews, the following step is listening to customers' feedback to understand what the business is doing right and what needs to be improved. This is crucial to an ORM strategy (Nguyen, 2015). Ironing out any wrinkles within an organization might lead to a 4- and 5-stars review because of customer satisfaction. This positively influence the online reputation and so the purchase decisions of potential customers. According to Nguyen (2015), "Some ORM companies, for instance, ReviewPro offer sophisticated tools such as semantic analysis which translate a vast amount data (reviews) to meaningful information". This allows a company to identify their areas for improvement and which aspects the business is doing right.

### 3. Research method

This chapter presents the research methodology, including the research strategy and design, data collection and analysis, target population and sampling procedures.

#### 3.1 Objective of the research

The objective *within* the research is to get insight in the guidelines of effectively managing online reviews to provide recommendations about conducting an ORM strategy.

The objective *of the* research is to contribute an improved online reputation for Apollo Motorhome Holidays by gaining knowledge about an online review management strategy.

Derived of the goal of the research, the following two central research questions and sub-questions have been formulated:

**CRQ1: What makes an online review management strategy?**

**SQ1.1: Which tools are required to process online reviews?**

SQ1.2: What motives consumers to write online reviews?

SQ1.3: What are the tactics to respond to online reviews?

**CRQ2: What are the best practices in online review management?**

SQ2.1: Which tools are required to reduce the amount of negative online reviews?

SQ2.2: Who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy?

SQ2.3: What are the financial implications of an online review management strategy?

The researcher can provide an answer to the research questions after collecting the meaningful data. The following chapter explains the process to the choice of data collection and analysis procedures according to the research onion of Saunders (2016).

#### 3.2 Research onion

The research methodology is determined by the means of the research onion of Saunders (2016) attached in appendix III, figure III.III. The research onion is a detailed model used as a foundation to determine the research methods to collect data. The onion elaborates from the outside to the inside. The first two layers are not relevant for this study which means the process starts with the research strategy layer. **The following five paragraphs describes the choices made for this study based on the research onion of Saunders (2016).**

##### 3.2.1 Methodological choice

A distinction can be made between quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research is based on numeric data (numbers) and qualitative research on non-numeric data such as words, video, audio and other similar material (Saunders, 2016). **In this study, qualitative data about an online review management strategy will be collected in order to advice Apollo Motorhome Holidays the best strategy. Therefore, non-numeric data such as interviews with experts and reviewers will be collected in order to compare the results with the interview of the client to discover their improvements and successes. However, the research objective of the interviews is to gain knowledge about the meanings and opinions the studied phenomenon provides to the subject. Examples of discussed topics during the interviews would be how to create remarkable experiences, encouragement, monitor and responding to reviews and how to process them within the company.**

##### 3.2.2 Research strategy

A multiple qualitative case study strategy is implemented to answer the research questions. "A case study is an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting" (Yin, 2014). The author explains that an in-depth research has the capacity to understand what is happening and the reason behind. **A case study is used as a research strategy since detailed and intensive research from**

different aspects is required at multiple experts and reviewers (Yin, 2014). However, this study involves a multiple-case study since different interviews with reviewers and experts are benchmarked regarding online review management strategies. This means that more than one case will be examined. According to Yin (2014), a multiple-case study is more robust than a single case study since different cases are compared with each other. The purpose of this study is to make a comparison between the investigated cases and combine the findings from the different interviews into a total picture. The interviews will be compared in order to analyze similarities in outcomes which provide input for the advisory part. A characteristic of a case study is the use of a numerous of data sources which is defined as triangulation. This research combines a numerous of data collection methods to receive in-depth information such as literature review and interviews with experts, an employee and the reviewers of the client. The interviews with the experts and the employee are studied and analyzed separately. Subsequently, the results are compared to analyze the need of improvements for the client. The research is concerned with the client as a whole which means it is defined as a holistic case study (Saunders, 2016). The aim of this case study is literal replication which means the cases are chosen carefully and show similar outcomes (Saunders, 2016). According to Yin (2014), literal replication needs at least two cases. This research involves interviews with a minimum of six experts and reviewers and one employee of Apollo (§3.2.4).

### 3.2.3 Time horizons

Time horizons contains the duration of the research. There are two types (1) longitudinal studies are repeated over a long period of time and (2) cross-sectional studies are limited to a particular time (Saunders, 2016). This research is a cross-sectional study since the interviews are conducted over a short period of time of two months in order to achieve the first deadline.

### 3.2.4 Data collection and data analysis

This intensive research involves a numerous of data collection methods (triangulation) to generate in-depth information into the topic. First of all, literature review is conducted in order to get insight into the concept ORM. This information is used as a foundation for the interviews since the theory provides a clear structure of how to manage online reviews. However, since the theory is limited and the aim of the research is to gain deeper insight into an ORM strategy, interviews will be conducted with experts in the field. These results of the interviews will be compared with the results of the interview with the client to discover their successes and improvements. Additionally, in order to conduct a meaningful research analysis, interviews with reviewers will be used to discover their motives to publish online reviews which is useful information in order to respond to their needs.

According to Yin (2014), interviews are one of the most important sources of a case study. The methodology of the data collection comprised semi-structured interviews. This type of interview is allowed to pose relevant questions, but it also leaves room free for personal input from the interviewee (Verhoeven, 2011). The aim of the interview with the experts is to gain knowledge and experience into the best practices of an ORM strategy. A semi-structured interview allows the interviewer to cover all the key areas since it is based on a structured questionnaire, but the respondent is able to share its own experiences and opinions. Conducting field research allows the researcher to answer the first and second central question and its sub-questions substantiated with the theory of the literature review. The same interview guide will be provided to the experts, reviewers and the client. The reason of this is to compare the outcomes in order to analyze the improvements and successes of Apollo which offers input for the advisory part.

With regards to the method of data analysis of the conducted interviews will be relying on the operationalization of the theoretical framework. The interviews will be literally converted to text and matched with the sub aspects of the operationalization which is presented in appendix V. Therefore,

the interviews are shattered into fragments and labeled with an open code (Verhoeven, 2011). An open code is a summary of a piece of text in one or a few words (Verhoeven, 2011). The open codes are linked to the axial codes in the code tree, presented in appendix VI. The axial codes consist of the five aspects of the model of Nguyen (2015) that makes an ORM strategy. These aspects are the key areas to be discussed during the interviews. However, an axial has been used to connect relationships between the text fragments and codes to analyze the interviews (Verhoeven, 2011).

### 3.2.5 Sample

The study involves a select sample due to the fact that not all of the research population are known and available (Verhoeven, 2011). Not all members of the population have the same chance of being included in the sample. This chance depends on the researcher's choice (Verhoeven, 2011). The sample will be pulled according to the requirements of the researcher in collaboration with the client.

#### Sample reviewers

The sampling of this part of the research will consists of collecting qualitative data of the reviewers. This group will be selected by the following criteria:

- Travel for work/leisure at least two times a year
- Active in writing online reviews. Publishing at least once a month an online review
- Age group: 24–40 years

This criterion in combination with the snowball method will be implemented in order to decide the target population. This means that the researcher uses its own network such as friends and family (Verhoeven, 2011). However, the aim of the sample is to select the customer of Apollo in order to discover their motives and experiences, but due to the privacy policies it is not allowed to randomly reach customers. A solution is that the client should ask their consumers during the check-out process if they would like to participate within a research, but this means that the researcher has to be available any time. Due to the time difference between the client and the researcher and the lack of time it has been decided to implement the snowball method. To ensure the validity of the research, Verhoeven (2011) recommend conducting 10–15 interviews. The field research involves thirteen interviews including the interviews with an employee of the client, reviewers and the experts. The interviews with the reviewers involves six conversations since the researcher collected reliable information to provide an answer to the research questions. The interviews are conducted via Skype conversation since the researcher made use of its own international network. The following table presents the respondents and their position and expertise.

Name	Position and expertise
Susana Passinhas	Portuguese living in Amsterdam who travels minimum twice a year.
Thomas v/d Berg	Travels minimum four times a year and active in publishing reviews for restaurants.
Vincenzo Cretella	Italian, working in the tourism industry for more than 10 years and is very active in publishing online reviews.
Andrew Clarkey	American, travels mainly for work.
Angel Wung	Taiwanese who travels minimum four times a year. Active in posting reviews for Airbnb.
Evelina Kontrimaite	Lithuanian girl who travels minimum four times a year.

Table 1. List of interviewee reviewers

#### Sample experts

The sampling plan selected is purposive sampling to conduct interviews with experts. This means that the selection of the sample is based on particular characteristics (Verhoeven, 2011). The experts selected are selected according to the following requirements:

- Two years of experience in online marketing or guest relations
- Experienced in Online Review Management
- Preferable related to the tourism sector
- English speaking during the interviews

Consultants in online reputation management are being reached but are not interested in an interview since their product is to deliver an online review management strategy to their clients. However, the researcher decided to select experts within the hotel industry, because of its international character, who are active in responding to their online reviews. Therefore, channels such as TripAdvisor, Google Review and Facebook have been investigated. Hotels with a high score in online reputation were selected and reached by a phone call in order to talk to the person who is in charge of ORM to check their experiences to make sure they can provide reliable information to the study. For this thesis report the branches does not matter since the process of managing online reviews is likewise for each company. With regards to the sample size of the field research, it has been decided to interview six experts in the field. The interviews are a face to face conversation and was conducted in the workforce of the respondent.

Name	Position and expertise
Roos Dijkema	Executive office trainee. Replacement for the Marketing manager during the interview. Interview questions are sent in advance, so they analyzed and discussed it together.
Roland Schaap	Marketing Executive. Managing and activating Social Media Channels.
Marlon Roosblad	Marketing Manager.
Brenda Knoll	Content editor specialist. Implementing and optimization of consumer generated content. Experienced in shopping experience content.
Nick Tombokan	Assistant Front-Office Manager. Responsible for guest satisfaction.
Rochelle Plet	Guest Experience Coordinator.

Table 2. List of interviewee experts

The decision to interview the reviewers and experts is to deliver a meaningful and complete thesis assignment to the client since the information is complementary to each other. The aim of the interviews with the experts is to get in-depth information into the concept ORM while the purpose of the interviews with the reviewers is to get insight into their motives of writing online reviews. The collected information will be compared in order to analyze if there are any similarities or how the experts can influence the needs of the reviewers with their expertise and knowledge. However, Mr. Cretella was selected to get insights in his motives to write online reviews, but during the interview he provided information based on his own working experience into the concept ORM which made a combination of these two subjects. Although he provided more relevant information into his own motives, it has been determined to use his information as a reviewer.

#### 4. Research results

**This chapter presents the results of research questions based on the literature review followed by the interviews with the reviewers, experts and the employee of the client. The results of the interviews are provided with a linked code to the transcribed interviews in appendix V.**

Currently there is a lack of scientific information related to an ORM strategy since the subject is quite new and upcoming. This means that the answers to the research questions are mainly based on the five aspects of the ORM model of Nguyen (2015). The conducted interviews provide more in-depth information into the aspects.

The data collection method of this thesis report contains triangulation meaning that different data collection methods (interview with experts, reviewers and employee of the client) have been used to provide an answer to the research questions. The statements of these respondents are combined to compare the results which provides input to answer the first and second research questions in chapter five. However, some research questions are answered by one group of respondents. For instance, SQ1.2 shows the results of the interviews with the reviewers since it discusses the motives to publish an online review. SQ2.2 and SQ2.3 are answered by the statements of the experts since the aim of the questions is gaining knowledge into the best practices which are relevant for the advisory part.

##### **SQ1.1: Which tools are required to process online reviews?**

The main positive and online negative reviews have to be discussed within a meeting or the involved department to analyze the businesses successes and its need of improvements. Online complaints which occurs more often have to be resolved by implementing a plan of action. The improvements can be presented online to show (potential) consumers that companies take their complaints seriously. This will increase the trustworthiness of consumers which might lead to return customers.

“We have a weekly meeting with the management and to discuss the reviews from the week before the positive ones mentioning also the negative ones. And then in time, together with the management we try to find trends in positive or negative way and your response to it that you could make an action plan” (Basato, 2019, code 5.6)

“What we do if there is a bad review, we email the department involved with we received this review, please give some input about what happened so I can send a correct answer to the guest. And then we have a department meeting every month and then we discuss the year-to-do highlight of Trust you, the three worst mentioned things and the top three” (Dijkema, 2019, code 1.9)

“We just discuss it, not necessarily in a meeting. But sometimes it is just discussed, and the response is drafted and then we discuss we different departments what we can improve. So, it is a continues improvement of the service of the hotel and those kinds of things” (Schaap, 2019, code 2.7)

“We have a reputation meeting set up by weekly or monthly. If you are using an online reputation system and depending on the price of the system. Those systems give you a report, they give analytics where you can see groups of complaints and where you score high or low and based on that we discuss it internally. The person responding to the reviews even if you have an analytics system in place, should be part of your management reputation team” (Roosblad, 2019, code 3.9)

"When I think within the department like you have the fashion department, the furniture department inside of Wehkamp and they handle their own reviews. I think we are a bit too big company to have this in cooperated into a larger meeting" (Knoll, 2019, code 4.8)

The interview with the client indicates that Apollo is not effectively analyzing their online reviews. The online reviews are managed at one specific department and are not discussed within a meeting.

"Mostly they get dealt with through guest services but in amongst some of those reviews though might need to question other areas of the business" (Saton, 2019, code 7.6)

The interviews with the experts and the reviewers show similar outcomes. Both confirm that negative online reviews have to be resolved and transferred into a plan of action. The first step that a company has to follow is to answer with a personal approach to their reviewers. This shows (potential) consumers that a company take their complaints into consideration. This can be achieved through showing online how the complaint have been improved.

"So, anything that's tangible you know anything that's tangible or shows that whatever I was unsatisfied with got corrected would be fantastic. You know for example if I was overcharged or something like that then they give you some sort of drink voucher or just you know something tangible that not only a would get you back in the location but B would kind of assuage your original complaint if that makes any sense" (Clarkey, 2019, code 12.7)

"First of all, I would like to get an answer why the service wasn't good as I expected and if they would do anything to change it. So, if they will take any type of actions to change or was it my mistake and they won't do anything. At least a kind of reaction and that it will be followed by action" (Kontrimaité, 2019, code 13.7)

#### **SQ1.2: What motives consumers to write online reviews?**

The interviews declare that the motives to write online reviews begins by the experience the customers have had. In this case, there are two instances which motivates them to write an online review. First of all, they are willing to write an online review when the experience of their service was outstanding. This means that the product or service they purchased was above expectations. In contrast, the second motivation to write an online review is when the purchased product or service is below expectations. The interviews indicated that the interviewees not tend to write an online review when their experience was average. So, consumers write online reviews only when their stay was extremely positive or negative.

"Either I am super unsatisfied, something went wrong, or I am really really happy. So, it just went well as expected usually I do not say anything" (Passinhas, 2019, code 8.1)

"I only do it when I am very satisfied so when it is a remarkable experience" (V/d Berg, 2019, code 9.2). According to this interviewee, a remarkable experience is; "In a case of a hotel, if you just enter the hotel, they already know your name or they be kind in the way they approach you or the rooms, are they complimentary. Things they offer you. From the total guest experience, from A to Z" (V/d Berg, 2019, code 9.1).

"So, this one I will take my experiences in Airbnb. If I just go to the house and I realize the host is amazing and provides me a lot of information about surroundings, I was warm greeted then I will write definitely a review for that person. If not, sometimes, well I might complain a little

bit but most of the times I will just ignore it. I wouldn't leave any review because I am not happy the general experience" (Wung, 2019, code 10.2).

"I think at the moment it is a must for me. I have to leave my feedback in order to help the guests coming after me. So, that's why I always leave a feedback or a review. I mean, you do not have to leave a feedback only if you had a bad stay. You should you leave a positive feedback if you had a nice stay or had a nice time" (Cretella, 2019, code 11.2).

"So, I think that there's two instances in which I would like to write an online review and they're kind of polar opposite. So, the first is going to be if I had an incredible experience and the company informed me that they valued my contribution via review I would be happy to do it or if I had an absolutely abhorrent time, I would write on the Internet that I had a poor time. So basically, you need to go between the two extremes. I'm not really a person who write a review for a three-star experience" (Clarkey, 2019, code 12.3).

"Well, usually, personally I write a review either if I have an exceptional and good service or something exceptionally bad. So, when it is something average it doesn't encourage me to write something because that's what you usually expect. So, if there is something unexpected in the service, either it is bad or good, usually I write a review" (Kontrimaité, 2019, code 13.2).

### **SQ1.3: What are the tactics to respond to online reviews?**

The number and the content of response influences a company's performance. This means that companies need to implement a well-defined respond strategy (Lui, Bartosiak, Piccoli, Sadhya, 2018). This allows a company to respond in a proper manner to their reviewers. According to Barsky and Frame (2009), companies should respond to all their reviews within 24 hours in a professional and personalized approach. However, if it is not possible to reply within 24 hours, companies should respond first to all their negative reviews to resolve the problem as soon as possible. It might be that consumers are not satisfied with the action taken or that there is a misunderstanding which result in a discussion online. This have to be avoided due to the impression the future guests might receive.

#### Responding to positive online reviews

Responding to positive online reviews is easier compared to the negative reviews. Since the interviews and literature confirms that reviewers appreciate a personal reply, it is of major importance to avoid automatized messages. A personal reply does not mean that it has to be a long message. A couple of sentences are already approved by the reviewers. A reply to positive reviews shows that a company is actual listening and thank the reviewer for their feedback. (Destination BC, 2013). Besides, it discovers the successes of a company which can be highlighted.

Reviewtrackers indicate five steps to follow to respond to positive reviews. 1) Say thank you, this shows appreciation towards the reviewers who took the time to publish their experiences. 2) Reinforce the positive, identify the memorable moment during their experience and mention it in the response. 3) Let customers know you would love to see them again. In this stage the company invites the reviewers them to return. 5) Mention other products or services. In this phase companies can stimulate to try the other product or service during their stay.

#### Responding to neutral online reviews

Neutral online reviews are the reviews between the positive and negative ones (Reviewtrackers, n.d.). This involves reviews with an average rating of 3-stars. Even if this type of reviews contains little information, it is of major importance to respond to it since consumers are



feeling appreciated and recognized. Next to it, neutral reviews are set to discover what the reviewer exact means with their feedback. There are four steps to follow to respond to neutral reviews (Reviewtrackers, n.d.). 1) Say thank you, in this step the company mention that it appreciates the reviewers' feedback and the taken time to write the review. 2) Reinforce the positive, start the response by mentioning the positive comment even if it contains critical notes. 3) Reinforce the negative, acknowledge the situation followed by an apology. 4) Take it offline, the last step is to receive more insight into the problem by asking the consumers for more details. Therefore, it is of major importance to avoid a discussion online. This means that the business has to provide their contact details. Appendix VII presents an example of a respond to neutral reviews.

#### Responding to negative online reviews

Negative online reviews are set as an opportunity to discover the barriers of the company. A negative review can be turned into a positive online review if the problem is resolved. Therefore, it is of major importance to reply with a personal approach to all negative online reviews. This shows the current and future customers that companies take the complaints seriously (Nguyen, 2015). Responding to negative reviews is challenging because the reviewer and company might misunderstand each other. Reviewtrackers provide seven steps to follow to answer to negative online reviews. 1) Address the reviewers, the first step is to personally address the reviewer. 2) Say thank you, in this step a business shows their appreciation among the negative feedback. 3) Apologize and sympathize. 4) Take responsibility, acknowledge the customers' complaint and mention that the problem is going to be resolved within the future. 5) Make things right, in this stage it is of major importance to repeat the complaint of the consumer followed by the action taken. 6) Take the issue offline, discussions have to be avoided online. Therefore, the company's contact has to be mentioned within the message. 7) Ask for a second chance. The last part of the message is to invite the consumer back. If this is the case, it is of major importance to welcome them openly and the problem is resolved (Appendix VII).

This theory is supported by the study of Nguyen (2015) which declares a respond to a negative review contains: "A thank you for guest' business and review, an apology for shortcomings, an explanation for inconsistent performance, and a discussion of corrective actions and improvements". The interviews with the reviewers indicated the feeling of being recognized when a business replies to their reviews. They appreciate the company's commitment to listen to their feedback:

"In a very human way. I think you need to be honest, polite and just reply. I think they should reply to all of them equally" (Passinhas, 2019, code 8.7)

"Well, it depends if it is a positive or negative but I think they always should respond because it is a way how you can show your future guest that you take everything serious what you do and if it was a bad review then I would be more satisfied if they reply, trying to understand what went wrong and maybe talk with improvement solutions so ever" (V/d Berg, 2019, code 9.7)

"So, if I publish it online, I am happy to receive a feedback directly right under my review, by a comment or something, that is totally lovely. And sometimes I will be happy if they send me a direct e-mail or private message. It is more customized. They respect my feeling, my experiences and everything and they are happy to talk about it" (Wung, 2019, code 10.5)

"Honestly, I always like when a person spent time to write me a couple of words or sentences. It is really nice to see when someone is not using a standard form or reply that the can spent

some time to write something. So, I do not like to see standard forms or something like that. I like to feel warm sentences” (Cretella, 2019, code 11.6)

“I think they need to respond to all of them. The length and content on which they are responding to should be commensurate with you know how detailed or how you know the gravity of the message.” (Clarkey, 2019, code 12.5 & 12.6)

“It would be really nice if the company answer at least in several words. “Thank you for your review”. So that you actually know they actually noticed it. At least in a few words I believe they should answer to every review.” (Kontrimaité, 2019, code 13.6 & 13.7)

The results of the interviews with the reviewers indicate that they would like to get responded in a personal manner to all their positive and negative reviews whereas some experts mainly focus on responding to their negative reviews. There are a few respondents who strive to respond to all their reviews which is in contrast to the results of the interview with the client mentioning that they respond to their reviews which are the most valuable for them. Additionally, the client is not fully aware of the tactics to respond with a personal approach. In fact, the interview indicates the standard messages they provide to their reviews followed by an automatic message after a few hours and during the weekends.

“We tried to respond to most to the reviews that I guess I'm the most severe. It's a bit of a tough one because we sort of look at the most severe for the ones that involve like financial decisions or financial impact the most because if we've overcharged someone then we want to be able to give that money back to them as soon as possible. After hours it will be an automatic message. So, it's normally responded to from our guest services area and they only open Monday to Friday that a week in certain times. So outside of that there's an automated response” (Saton, 2019, code 7.5)

“We respond to the reviews every day both positive and negative. When people are happy with their stay and they place a positive review, they like being recognized or like they like the response we give them. And people who are less satisfied with their stay, they like being recognized that they feel listened to. Therefore, it is for us very important to respond to immediately” (Schaap, 2019, code 2.5).

“It is very difficult to respond 100% to every review. Just of the size of numbers, depending on the period. So what you do, to make sure to respond to all negative reviews.” (Roosblad, 2019, code 3.8)

“No, not all because there is simply not enough time in the world to respond to all of them but when we think a customer is really angry or really mad at us or really upset about something. I really think we need to do something.” (Knoll, 2019, code 4.7)

“That just because one person was more descriptive does not mean that that review is worth more to us or you know like the guests took the time to sit down and write a review. All the reviews are valuable rather than negative or positive and that is why I respond to everything” (Basato, 2019, code 5.7).

“We reply to all of them, negative and positive. We appreciate it, do not leave a comment including a rating, we do not reply. But if they do leave a comment and a rating, we reply” (Plet, 2019, code 6.7)

### **SQ2.1: Which tools are required to reduce the amount of negative online reviews?**

The interviews indicated that negative online reviews can be reduced by delivering a remarkable experience through personalization which creates a wow-effect. A remarkable experience involves managing expectations and that problems are resolved before departure. Additionally, reducing the amount of negative reviews can be achieved through sending an internal survey to consumers after their stay. This questionnaire is for internal use which allows a company to discover their areas of improvement. In case of a complaint, the company can reach the consumer personally and resolve the problem as soon as possible. The aim of a survey is to avoid that consumer publish negative online reviews and resolve the problem as soon as possible in order to make them satisfied. In this case the consumer can be stimulated to publish an online review because of their satisfaction.

A remarkable experience is defined by the reviewers that their experience meets their expectations. For business it is of major importance to be honest into their online presence so that consumers know what to expect when purchasing a product or service. Tombokan (2019) confirmed the importance of being real towards consumers;

“Yes and managing expectations. I am not sure how they are shown online but what we show online is actually what we have. I know sometimes in the hotel that it shows that they tried to put a nice picture that looks bigger than it is. That's how you destroy your own online reputation. You just have to be real here really be real” (Code, 5.10)

Tombokan's (2019) statement is confirmed by the reviewers mentioning that a remarkable experience is about managing their expectations;

“In a case of a hotel, if you just enter the hotel, they already know your name or they be kind in the way they approach you or the rooms, are they complimentary. Things they offer you. From the total guest experience, from A to Z” (V/d Berg, 2019, code 9.1)

“Honestly, I think that a well-trained and positive staff makes a lot more difference. I mean at the end of the day you know a bed is a bed but if the people around the you know in the company are happy to be there then you will be too. I think that's a good way of putting it” (Clarkey, 2019, code 12.2).

“So, for example, when I enter a five-star hotel I kind of expect the people will greet me, will help me carry all my luggage, bring me directly to the counter and providing me some drinks and explain everything to me and help me to check-in. So, the process shouldn't take long so I don't have to sit there waiting for them to greet me. They have to approach me” (Wung, 2019, code 10.1)

“A remarkable experience involves a lot of details from the entrance, then you have all the receptions. So, really the remarkable experience I think it concludes the all package of this and if they have anything more to offer than just a bed where you can sleep. Of course, the staff is really a big add to it. Because if people would be unfriendly or helpful at all you cannot ask them anything, of course it will be a complimentary experience” (Kontrimaité, 2019, code 13.1)

Additionally, creating remarkable experience contains reaching consumers with a personal approach which increases the amount of positive online reviews.

"Well, a remarkable experience is something when it is above expectation and then you will share it everywhere. So, it is having to be with the outstanding or being above from what is expected. This is like the ultimate experience." (Passinhas, 2019, code 8.2).

"So, if I were going to stay at a hotel something like them having my preferences from last time knowing some of the things, I did make sure that if I put any requests in beforehand that those were accommodated in overall pleasant staff" (Clarkey, 2019, code 12.1)

The interviews with experts indicate the approaches of personalization to their consumers. This in contrast to the interview with the client. Saton (2019) indicates that creating a remarkable experience is based on the standard steps a company has to follow within their service in order to make a consumer satisfied:

"Well I think that the day you the answer to that is yes, in theory. So, the theory of it is that we do follow the process you know one to 10 or whatever it might be. But in the practical sense that's not how it turns out" (Saton, 2019, code 7.1)

"We have personalized amenities on the room that we place for the guest that when they enter the room" (Schaap, 2019, code 2.1). "When guest check in they will be taking the time to review everything and read through that they have a personal connection with the guest before or during the check-in which means that they should have questions or should there be obstacles that should be resolved before the check-in which eliminates the problem in a later stage during their stay" (Schaap, 2019, code 2.2).

"To have this little interaction that really gives our guest energy and inspiration. Those are things they will talk about" (Roosblad, 2019, code 3.1). "Somebody comes in and checks-in and saying on forehand that she wants to surprise the boyfriend on the birthday and then we do things in the room. We still need to make sure that all our other aspects are great as well" (Roosblad, 2019, code 3.2).

"I think a remarkable experience is when a product, especially we are discussing now products, that they outperform on expectations because a customer has an expectation about a product based on the description, based on the product description. Its title, price and I think review management expectations" (Knoll, 2019, code 4.1)

"So, the first step is gathering so much information as we can in our emails that we send to our guest before they arrive. So for example, for family we have, these are also very important for us because they have little kids and then we always ask the name of the children, the ages because of course not a five year old kid likes the same as a 10 years old so we always want to see the difference so we can personalize the gifts" (Plet, 2019, code 6.1).

As mentioned in the answer to SQ2.1, a survey is additional tool to reduce the amount of negative online reviews. The client of the thesis report is currently implementing this new system advised by the researcher of this thesis report during a Skype conversation (Wieberdink, 2019). This is based on the interviews with the experts mentioning the system of implementing a survey.

"What happens is when they drop off the van, we trigger a message to them which asks them to write their experience and that writing is your standard piece. And from there we are about to implement a new system that if they write us highly because after they give us a write an MP's writing, we send them a survey. This is going to be the new process first. It gets a bit

more data. We get a survey and they say how is the booking process has these houses. We ask them what if there's 15 questions or something like that. But in order to get our increase in four- and five-star reviews publicly so that basically on Google. If you come through with a high-end MP's so there are nine or 10, we put reviewers from Google right at the top of the survey and we also add a bottom if you between MP's between 1 and 7" (Saton, 2019, code 7.2)

"To make sure the guests will come back to us first with feedback and then sharing it online. And that is why we have the Revinate online survey to ensure that we can fix their feeling before they share it with the world or have a negative feeling to not come back anymore" (Plet, 2019, code 6.7).

"So, we are working with Revinate. I don't know if you're aware of it is it a software tool which creates our online surveys. But that's only for internal use, we can only see it internally so external people cannot see the surveys that the guests fill in on Revinate. Also, since the pre-arrival emails from marketing or when they have made a reservation. So, it has all our customers our guests in it profiles. Yes. And from that creates a comparison competitive comparison to all other five-star properties in Amsterdam" (Plet, 2019, code 6.11).

"After they leave, they receive, it is the system we use is called TrustYou, which they receive an email for an online survey and that survey comes directly to us and it is only posted in the website of the hotel. It doesn't go to TripAdvisor" (Basato, 2019, code 5.13).

A respondent of the reviewers group indicated the powerfulness of negative reviews and the willingness to fill in a survey.

"In some cases, I would do but I would like to do it more when it is a survey or like an enquete or something like that. So that is for their own needs, not online published" (V/d Berg, 2019, code 9.5)

Additionally, implementing a guest survey increases guest loyalty and attract new guests (ReviewPro, 2019). A key reason of using a survey is that it prevents negative reviews. According to a case study of ReviewPro (2019), a conversion of TripAdvisor reviews doubled from 8% to 18.7%. This means that surveys do enhance the companies' reputation.

#### **SQ2.2: Who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy?**

The interviews indicated that the responsible of managing online reviews is conducted by several departments within the company. There is no one specific person who is responsible for online reviews, but it is a collaboration between more departments.

Hotel Okura declares that there is no structure related to the person who is responsible for their online reviews. For now, the duty manager is in charge for it. [1.8] "Well, the thing is that this is discussable. For ten years there is no clear structure. The duty managers respond to the F&B outlets. So, all the restaurants" (Dijkema, 2019).

Schaap (2019) mentions that the marketing department is in charge for it. There are two persons involved.

"It depends on the set up and the size of the business. The way we set it up is co-responsible between marketing and communications and the front of house. The operational people

because usually a review has to do with something operationally and especially when it is a negative one" (Roosblad, 2019, code 3.7).

"Right now, I am in charge. I would like to roll this out more in our organization, so it carried out by a lot of people and currently there are a few departments that are really working with reviews. The quality department which is responsible for own clothing or own furniture etc. They also manage their own reviews" (Knoll, 2019, code 4.5).

"Just us two" (Bosato and Tombokan, 2019, code 5.4).

"The whole team. So, in principle it's marketing and the guest experience team." (Plet, 2019, code 6.5).

### **SQ2.3: What are the financial implications of an online review management strategy?**

The data collected from the interviews with regards to the costs shows similar outcomes. The two main costs of conducting an online review management strategy are the software package and the employees who are in charge for it. The software package provides some additional features that allows the company to make it as costly as they want.

"We pay for TrustYou because all good marketing analysis program are paid" (Dijkema, 2019, code 1.11).

"You can make it as elaborate as you want. You can spend as much time as dedicated to online management or online review management systems, a software for example." (Schaap, 2019, code 2.9).

"Yes, the tool and the employees. Sometimes extra money is involved when you want to like additional features to the tool you have." (Knoll, 2019, code 4.9).

"It is indeed the employee cost you are thinking of and the platforms the costs are included. These are the two main costs" (Plet, 2019, code 6.9).

After answering the sub-questions, the researcher can provide an answer to the first and second central research questions. This is discussed in the following chapter.

## 5. Research conclusion

This section of the thesis provides an answer to the two central research questions.

### CRQ1. What makes an online review management strategy?

An ORM strategy comprises of five aspects: 1) create remarkable experience, 2) encourage, 3) responding, 4) monitoring and 5) acting upon. All these five aspects contain several approaches that makes an effective ORM strategy. The aspects can be distinguished into reactive and proactive strategies. Having a proactive approach by creating an unforgettable experience is an effective method to influence favorable sentiments which gains positive reviews and avoid negatives reviews. Encouraging customers to post online reviews is a part of the proactive approach. The aim of this approach is to receive as many reviews as possible which influence the trustworthiness of customers. The last part of the proactive strategy is monitoring online reviews which gives companies opportunities to discover areas of successes and improvements. The first reactive approach is to respond to the feedback which involves a reply with a personalized manner. Finally, after tracking new online reviews and monitoring them, a company must listen and understand to the customers' feedback. This acting upon stage is part of the reactive strategy which involves analyzing the company's successes and need of improvement. However, consumers are motivated to write their online review when their experience was above expectations. This means that creating a remarkable experience increases the amount of positive online reviews. In order to achieve this, companies should follow the following guidelines:

- Welcoming the customers with a personal approach
- Approach them during their stay with a personal manner
- Manage expectations
- Resolve the problem before departure
- Provide a small personalized amenity

Additionally, consumers might forget to publish an online review, or they are not aware of it. This means that companies should encourage their consumers to publish an online review by following the follow steps:

- Encouragement through e-mail
- Encouragement by asking it during the check-out process
- Publish a negative online review internally through a survey

Once the company receives a certain amount of reviews it is required to respond to it to enhance the online reputation and to strengthen the trustworthiness of consumers. Therefore, the company should follow the following guidelines:

- Respond in a personal manner
- Respond directly to the online reviews, preferable within 24 hours
- Respond to all the online reviews (negative and positive)
- If there is no time to respond to all the reviews, first reply to the negative reviews

### CRQ2: What are the best practices in online review management?

The best practices are based on the five aspects that makes an ORM strategy. Each aspect contains a conclusion which is based on the research results of chapter four.

- 1) Creating remarkable experience is about establishing the wow-effect towards the consumers. This effect is created when the customer's experience is above expectations. In order to do that, companies should make their product or service personalized. This means that

companies should gather as much as information about their customers to respond to their personal wishes.

- 2) Companies should encourage their consumers to publish an online review in order to increase the amount of reviews on their review platforms. The amount of reviews influences the trustworthiness of consumers meaning that companies should aim to receive as many as possible. Consumers are willing to write an online review when they are asked during the check-out process or receiving an e-mail. Additionally, providing a small card reminds them as well to publish an online review.

However, companies are not likely to stimulate their consumers to publish a negative online review. This can be avoided by implementing an internal survey which is sent to the e-mail of the consumers. In case of receiving a negative survey, the company can personally reach the consumer and resolve the problem to make them satisfied again. If this is the result, companies can kindly ask to write an online review about their experience and the problem have been resolved. Consumers are willing to write an online review when they will be encouraged, this is the same for filling in a questionnaire.

- 3) Online reviews should be constantly monitored in order to discover the company's barriers and improvements. A software tool provides a clear overview of all the online reviews that comes in on the chosen review platforms of the company. This tool highlights the areas of successes and improvements. Depending on the budget of the company, an additional feature is to compare online reviews with the competitors. This allows a company to discover their barriers and successes and help to distinguish from its competitors. However, this tool has to be managed by a certain person or department within the company. The ideal situation is that online reviews are constantly managed by the same person or department, preferable two persons within the company which provides structure.
- 4) Consumers are feeling appreciated when they receive a personal answer to their reviews. This means that companies have to answer to all their online reviews with a personal approach since it enhances the trustworthiness to its (potential) customers. This is because the consumers are taking time to write their online reviews which does not mean that one review is more important than the other. Therefore, they would like to receive an answer in exchange for their effort. However, companies have to focus first on their negative reviews and resolve the complaint immediately. Once the negative reviews have been settled it is of major importance to respond to all the positive reviews as well. The content of the reply is not that expanded as to the negative reviews, but it shows consumers that their reviews have been noticed.
- 5) The acting upon part involves analyzing the company's successes and need of improvements. Online reviews have to be discussed within the company which means that all the involved departments have to be aware about its performance. A weekly or monthly meeting is a tool to discuss the online reviews which are based on the main positive and negative reviews integrated in the software program. The positive reviews mean that the company is doing well on certain aspects which must be constantly promoted. The negative reviews have to be



transferred into a plan of action to show (potential) consumer the complaint has been taken into consideration. Consumers would like to receive a reply to their negative reviews followed by an action plan. The process and results of this plan can be shown online in order to prove that the issue has been improved. Another step to follow, based on the content of the negative review, is to personal contact the consumer to resolve the problem.

Now that the research questions are discussed it is of major importance to analyze the validity and the reliability of the research. The validity presents if the results of the research matches the reality (Swaen, 2014). This is discussed in the following chapter.

## 6. Research discussion

**This chapter discusses the validity and reliability of the research conducted. The terms construct validity, internal validity and external validity are presented. Finally, the reliability of the research is discussed.**

The construct validity refers to a number of measuring instruments which are being used within the research (Verhoeven, 2011). In other words, according to Verhoeven (2011); “measure what you want to know”. This means that how well the measurement instrument measures the actual truth of the research. In this study, several scientific literatures have been used in order to determine the core concept. The study of Nguyen (2015) only defined the core concept and developed a model related to an online review management strategy. The reason of this is that the subject is upcoming. Hence, this thesis report is based on the ORM model developed by Nguyen (2015). The literature is assessed through the AAOCC-criteria which increases the reliability of the thesis report.

The core concept contains of five concepts mentioned in the ORM model of Nguyen (2015). These subjective concepts are less measurable and have to be described properly so that the definition of the concept is understandable (Swaen, 2014). Within the theory the concept has to be defined, unraveled and related to the subjective concepts (Swaen, 2014). This process is accomplished within the theoretical framework, chapter two. Based on the scientific literature within the theoretical framework, an operationalization of the core concept is established which is presented in appendix III, figure III.III. This operationalization includes the sub-aspects that makes an online review management strategy. Additionally, it is used as a guideline for the interviews with the experts, reviewers and the employee of the client in order to get in-depth information into the five aspects. Because of this operationalization it was possible to keep asking questions during the interviews and to provide a structure to it. All the five aspects are discussed during the interviews with the chosen respondents. However, some respondents did not provide in-depth information. This means that this study contains a limited construct validity.

A research is internally valid if it is conducted in such a way that the conclusion can be accepted as the truth (Swaen, 2014). It says something about the quality of the research method, data collection and data analysts. In order to increase the internal validity, it is of major importance that the correct research methods are conducted so that it is measured what needs to be measured (Verhoeven, 2011). This thesis report contains qualitative research since the researcher needs input from experts in order to receive the best practices into an ORM strategy. These results are compared to the interview with an employee of the client **to discover their needs of improvement and successes**. To complete the thesis report, the researcher conducted interviews with reviewers in order to understand their motives of writing an online review. This information is relevant since the business can use several techniques to influence their consumers to publish online reviews. The internal validity could be increased to conduct more interviews with experts, but due to the lack of time **of the researcher it was not doable to reach more respondents**. The aim of the interviews with the experts was to interview three consultants and three marketing/online community managers. The group consultants were not interested since their product is to sell an ORM package **to their clients**. The interviews are conducted with marketing managers within the hospitality industry due to its international character. The aim of the interview with the reviewers was to carry out interviews with the customers of the client. Due to the privacy policies it was not possible to approach this group. However, the researcher implemented the snowball method and made use of its own social circle and approached people who are travelling and posting online reviews frequently.

In addition, the external validity refers to generalizability of the research (Verhoeven, 2011). The generalizability is the extent to which the results and conclusions of the study apply to other people and situations. With regards to the data collected, this research can be applied to any business within the tourism industry. Scientific literature and the interviews indicate the importance of ORM within the tourism sector and show equivalent outcomes about the concept. The interviews were conducted over a three-week period. According to Verhoeven (2011), the external validity can be increased to conduct the interviews on the same time. However, the place does not influence the external validity since the interviews were conducted in the workforce of the respondent so that the interviewee is comfortable with his surroundings. In addition, external validity refers to the sampling method within the research (Swaen, 2014). This study applies purposive sampling meaning that respondents are carefully chosen on their expertise and career experience. However, the external validity could be increased since one interview was conducted with a trainee instead with the marketing manager as agreed. Nevertheless, reliable information has been collected.

The term reliability refers to the extent to which the research is free of measurement errors (Verhoeven, 2011). In order to test the reliability, a research must be repeatable. The requirement is to conduct the research on a different time, with a different researcher, other test subjects and other circumstances (Verhoeven, 2011). Nowadays online reviews processes developments. If this research, with the same core concepts, will be conducted in two years it will show different outcomes due to the rapid trends among online reviews. It might be that new and more models are released or perhaps there is a replacement for online reviews. However, this is a reliable research since the research methodology is conducted with regards to the purposive sample, literature reviews and interviews. Indeed, the reliability is influenced by the chosen sample, data collection methods and data analysis (Verhoeven, 2011). The reliability increases when the research contains more data collection methods (Verhoeven, 2011). This thesis report contains triangulation which means several data collection methods have been conducted. This involves the interviews with the experts, reviewers and an employee of the client. The reliability can be increased by maintaining a topic list with fixed questions during the interviews, so that the questions can be asked in a logical sequence (Verhoeven, 2011). Within this research the researcher followed the sequence of a prepared questionnaire which provides structure to the interview and to make sure that the topic will be discussed. The interviews are recorded in order to proof that the interviews are conducted. However, the reliability increases by properly archiving and analyzing the data (Verhoeven, 2011). The thirteen interviews and literally transcribed to text and coded which results in a systematic overview of the research results. With regards to the reliability of the sample, there must be a substantive saturation (Verhoeven, 2011). This means that there is a guideline for the number of respondents within qualitative research. The guideline involves that there are enough respondents being interviewed if there is no new and relevant information added by new respondents. The six interviews with the experts and the reviewers present similar outcomes. The outcomes contain relevant information to answer the research questions.

## 7. Advisory part

**This chapter is the most relevant for the client, Apollo Motorhome Holidays. It advises how the client can implement an ORM strategy based on their objective.**

### 7.1 Introduction of the advice

This section is the end result of this thesis assignment. This part is the most relevant for the client, Apollo Motorhome Holidays. It provides a solution to the management question of the client on having no structure about managing their online reviews. As a consequence, a high amount of negative online reviews that damages the online reputation of the client and so the sales. Derived from the problem statement the following management question have been formulated:

*'What is the best way for Apollo Motorhome Holidays to manage their online reviews to improve their online reputation and increase in bookings?'*

The objective of the advisory part is to advice an online review management strategy to improve the online reputation of the client and subsequently an increase in bookings.

To provide an answer to the management question, the researcher connects the findings of the first and second central research questions. This allows the researcher to discover the needs of improvements and to formulate a set of alternatives based on each aspect of the ORM model of **Nguyen (2015)**. The researcher evaluates the most appropriate alternative for Apollo which is based on a criterion. After evaluating the proposed strategies, a suggestion of an implementation plan of the most suitable plan which will be implemented by the means of the PDCA cycle.

The theoretical framework confirms the importance of implementing an ORM strategy for business since it influences the reputation and the sales. Supported by the interviews, online reviews need to be managed in a consistent and effective manner. The advisory part advises the client how to manage their online reviews since the management has no structure approach. The form of the advice is based on the five aspects of the ORM model of Nguyen (2015). This means that the aspects of the strategy have been decided, but that they need to be formulated with a set of alternative strategies to analyze which meets the objective of the client.

### 7.2 Alternative strategies

**This part of the advisory part presents two proposed strategies to be implemented by Apollo.** It is of major importance that the strategies are related to an improvement of the online reputation since it is the focus area of Apollo Motorhome Holidays. In addition, it is crucial that the strategy increases the sales of the client. An improvement in sales positively impacts the revenue which might result in a profit for the company. This can lead to additional investments.

**The ORM strategy is based on the ORM Model of Nguyen (2015):** 1) create remarkable experience, 2) encourage, 3) monitor, 4) responding and 5) acting upon. These aspects are divided into proactive and reactive strategies. The first two approaches are divided by a proactive approach while the last three steps fall under reactive approach. For the client, Apollo Motorhome Holidays, the ORM strategy should consists of both strategies since the process of managing online reviews for Apollo will start over and all these aspects are required to manage it properly.

**Based on the results of the field research and literature review, the researcher discovered improvements for the client on each aspect of the model. The first aspect is to create remarkable experience. The reasoning for this aspect is the high amount of online complaints the client receives. As a result, a low average in star rating which damages their online reputation.** Based on the theoretical framework and the interviews, creating remarkable experience is about establishing a wow-effect to the consumers by making the service personalized, seeking for real-time feedback and making sure

that the problems are resolved before departure. The interview with the client confirms that Apollo is not providing a personal service to its customers and not asking for real-time feedback. Therefore, it is of major importance that the client enhances its personal services to increase the amount of positive online reviews. Improvements with regards to the encourage part is the low quantity of online reviews the client contains on its review platforms. As a result, (potential) customers purchase from its competitors since they feature a better online reputation. In addition, since the client do not contain that many reviews, it shows up low in local searches. So, it is strongly advisable that the client start to accumulate hundreds of online reviews. After collecting the reviews, the following step is monitoring. This allows the client to understand the feedback of its customers and to discover their needs of improvements and successes of their product and services. Since the client is not aware of its barriers, it is of major importance to track their reviews in order to analyze what can be improved. However, firstly it is required to establish the desired review platforms. Since the client is focusing on TripAdvisor and Google reviews it is determined to focus on these two aggregators. Regardless the feedback is negative or positive, a company should reply to reviews to show their customers that they are being noticed and listened. Responding to reviews is an opportunity for the company to positively change their image and convince (potential) customers to do the purchase. This aspect is of major importance for Apollo since the client do not contain a guideline on how to respond to their reviews. The acting upon part is based on how the online reviews will be processed within the company. The reasoning for this aspect is that the client does not process their reviews meaning that all the departments are not aware of its successes and barriers. However, the researcher determined two proposed strategies based on the aspects of the ORM model and field research. These are as follows;

#### **ORM Strategy 1**

The first step within the proposed strategy is to gather as much as information about the consumers before arrival through phone call in order to discover their personal preferences. This makes the service more personalized and the client can focus more on the needs of the customers. However, this task needs to be accomplished within the reservation team since it deals with the bookings of the consumers. The collected information needs to be communicated to the front office since they are responsible for the check-in process.

The second step to follow is to ask consumers to publish an online review. However, it requires effort and attention since customers are feeling forced when companies constantly ask for it. The tool required for this approach is to provide the customer a small card during the check-out process to remind them to write an online review. However, consumers might forget to publish an online review meaning that companies should send a reminder by e-mail after two days of their departure. This aspect will be implemented in ORM strategy 2 as well since the literature and the interviews confirm to implement one strategy.

The third step in the strategy is to monitor the online reviews. Monitoring online reviews might be time consuming so it is advised to implement a software tool that track the reviews. The interviews confirm to make use of a software tool since it is an efficient system to work with. Lately the client integrated a software tool within their strategy. However, this tool consists of the basic elements. A software tool contains several additional features which makes the costs higher. It is advisable to expand the features within the system so the client can keep on improving their reviews. Therefore, integrating a competitor set within the tool is advised in order to compare the online reviews with competitors. The reasoning of this alternative is that the competitors contain better online reviews than Apollo. As confirmed in the literature review, consumers tend to purchase from companies with better online reviews. As a result, a missed opportunity in sales. However, the competitor set provides an overview of the average star rating, the daily receiving reviews and the average respond rate of the competitors in comparison with the client. So, the feature allows the client to distinguish from its competitors. The fourth step within the strategy is to mainly focus on the negative reviews and reply to the most positive reviews. In this step the negative reviews are the focus area so that the client can fully focus on its

barriers. Regardless the strategies proposed, there are guidelines which needs to be followed regarding responding to reviews:

- Reviews should be responded within 24 hours
- Reviews should be responded in a professional and personalized manner
- Negative reviews do have the priority
- Always thank the reviewer in the beginning of the sentence for their time and effort to write a review

To make sure that the guidelines will be followed, an online community manager is responsible to accomplish this task. With regards to the required tool, the focus area will be the reviews on Google Reviews and TripAdvisor since it was considered as the two main aggregator of the client. However, online reviews should be processed so that each department is aware of the developments within the company. Processing online reviews is time consuming and therefore, the alternative proposed is to communicate the reviews directly to the addressed department(s). This method is the most efficient. However, a disadvantage is that the company is not aware of the developments as a whole.

### ORM Strategy 2

The first step advised within the second strategy is to provide a small personalized amenity in the campervan for the consumers since they do not expect to receive something during their stay. For instance, a personalized written postcard. The last step to follow of this approach is to call the customers during their trip in order to make sure that they are satisfied. This allows the client to resolve issues before departure which might lead to a positive online review. The second step to follow, which is equal to strategy 1, is to ask consumers to publish an online review by providing them a small card during the check-out process. As mentioned in strategy 1, the literature and reviews confirmed the efficiency of implementing a software tool. Within strategy it is advised to integrate the survey feature within the software program. The interviews confirm that surveys do avoid negative online reviews. Since the client is facing a poor online reputation, it is of major importance to receive positive feedback and avoid the negative ones. Having a positive online reputation influence the sales of the company which is confirmed in the literature review. However, this feature is lately integrated by client since it is advised by the researcher. After analyzing the information of the interviews, the researcher discovered the trend of implementing a survey feature. Through Skype conversation the researcher informed the client about this trend and started to implement it. However, online reviews should be monitored by the person who is in charge for it. It is advisable to hire an online community manager who manages the online reviews. This approach is recently implemented by the client and discussed with the researcher. The same person is also in charge to respond to all the negative and positive online reviews. This approach is time consuming, but the company shows their customers that they appreciate all the received feedback. In order to make the entire company aware of its developments among online reviews, it is advised to set a weekly meeting to discuss the main positive and negative reviews. The tool required for this alternative is the software tool that highlights the reviews which requires the most attention to be discussed in the meeting. The aim is that all the managers of several departments are involved to stimulate a collaboration to find the most suitable solution to the issue. The aim of the meeting is to improve the barriers and to keep track on the successes.

In summary it can be said that both strategies do meet the objective of the client since it is focused on improving the online reputation. Both strategies contain the same resources which is the software tool and the online community manager. However, the first strategy proposed involves the competitor set which is beneficial since the client will focus to distinguish from its competitors to get a better online reputation while the survey feature is focused on improving the barriers and avoiding the online

negative reviews. In order to analyze the best strategy proposed, a criterion has been set. This is discussed in the next chapter.

### 7.3 Criterion

**This chapter indicates the most suitable proposed strategy for the client.**

A criterion has been formulated to evaluate the most suitable strategy proposed. This criterion is based on time efficiency, financial implications and favorable sentiments. These criteria are based on the requirements of the client since the strategy needs to be financially feasible and implemented in a short period of time.

The objective of the advice is to advise an online review management strategy for Apollo Motorhome Holidays to improve their online reputation. The fact that the client is facing a high amount of negative reviews is not only influencing the online reputation, but also the sales. Since there is a lack of structure in managing online reviews, it is advisable to implement an ORM strategy which will be followed from the beginning. The strategy provides a structure in managing online reviews ensuring to control the customer's feedback, increase in customer trustworthy and satisfaction, increasing bookings which leads to an improvement in revenue and online reputation, the aim of Apollo.

Firstly, the researcher has chosen financial implications as a criterion since the aim of the client is to have an increase in sales as well. A meaningful investment has to be made in order to achieve this goal. Financial implications of the two strategies proposed are associated to FTE costs and software fees. Recently there is an online community manager hired at the client. An Online Community Manager earns an average salary of AU\$56,641 per year (Payscale, 2019). The average pay for an Online Community Manager contains AU\$21.75 per hour. People doing this job do not have more than ten years of experience. Below a calculation of the monthly salary the manager receives.

**AU\$56,641 a year/ 12 months = AUS \$4.720 monthly**

The online community manager is in charge of monitoring the system which is an additional investment. The theoretical framework confirmed that integrated tools do increase the online reputation and revenue. The first cost would be coming from the new employee as a position of an online community manager. The second cost would be coming from implementing the software system. According to a personal conversation with Saton (2019), the monthly fee of the software costs AUS\$460.

Costs	July	August	September	October	November	December
Salary online community manager	\$4.720	\$4.720	\$4.720	\$4.720	\$4.720	\$4.720
Software tool	\$460	\$460	\$460	\$460	\$460	\$460
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>	<b>\$5.180</b>

Table 3. Expected costs for the next six months

The benefits of implementing a software tool is an increasement in positive online reviews by 30%. This leads to an increase in price of 0.89% (Cornell University Studies) and an increase in occupancy by 0,54%. As a result, an increasement in the total revenue. **This means that both strategies do meet the requirements of the client, an improvement in sales.**

For instance, the cost of hiring a campervan for one week is calculated at AUS\$2.250 and the client is aiming to increase their online reviews by 30% yearly, this means that the client can increase its price yearly by 0,89%;

Year 1:  $\$2.250 \times 0,89\% = \$2.270$   
Year 2:  $\$2.270 \times 0,89\% = \$2.290$   
Year 3:  $\$2.290 \times 0,89\% = \$2.310$

In addition, according to a study of the Harvard Business School (Luca, 2011), an increase in one-star rating leads to a 9% increase in revenue. This means that the client should aim to effectively implement an ORM strategy. The costs will cover the investments related to an ORM strategy and finally, generating extra profit.

Secondly, time-efficiency has been chosen as a criterion since the strategy needs to be implemented within a short period of time. For the proposed strategies, the time frame can be met since the client recently hired an Online Community Manager and implemented a software tool. However, strategy 2 is more time consuming because of the respond frequency, analyzing the internal surveys and arranging weekly meetings. However, a full-time online community manager is hired meaning the person should be able to accomplish the tasks. Strategy 1 requires less time as Apollo will mainly focus on responding to negative reviews and processing reviews within the company is efficient. Investigating the competitor set requires more time since their strategy needs to be understand. However, this feature is not focusing on avoiding negative reviews, but on having a greater reputation than the competitors.

Lastly, favorable sentiments indicate whether the strategy offers the consumers personalized features and building customer trust. Strategy 2 creates additional value like personalized amenities (written postcards) and building customer trust by responding to all the positive and negative reviews. However, as a vehicle rental is more likely as a one-time travel experience, favorable sentiments should be interpreted as staying loyal with the consumers so they will online recommend it to (potential) customers. Despite strategy 1 contains personalization during the check-in process, it does not offer favorable sentiments for customers since it mainly focuses on responding to negative reviews and building a better online reputation than the competitors. However, customers who are more satisfied are willing to post an online review meaning that strategy 1 scores higher in the criteria.

#### 7.3.1 Criteria of evaluation

The following table presents the proposed strategies based on the criteria explained in 7.3. It is of major importance that the proposed strategies are related to the aim of the client which is taken into consideration for the criterion. The criterion is valued from 1–3 in which 1) is a bad propose, 2) medium propose and 3) good propose. The criteria with the highest score will be chosen as the most suitable strategy for the advisory part.

Criteria	ORM strategy 1	ORM strategy 2
Financial implications	3	3
Time-efficiency	2	2
Favorable sentiments	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 4. Evaluation of alternatives (own elaboration)



### 7.3.2 Results of the assessment

Based on the results of table 4, it can be concluded that strategy 2 is the most appropriate option for Apollo Motorhome Holidays as it is the alternative that has the highest total score compared to strategy 1.

Strategy 2 will be the first approach towards an ORM strategy for Apollo Motorhome Holidays consisting of a proactive and reactive approach. This strategy will meet the objective of the client since the relationship between a positive online reputation and an increase in the number of reviews and responding to all of them is confirmed (Nguyen, 2015). Responding to all online reviews causes favorable sentiments enhances the trustworthy towards (potential) consumers. Moreover, it induces positive online reviews which has a positive impact on sales (Nguyen, 2015). Additionally, the financial costs consist of the salary of the online community manager and the software tool which is already owned by the client. This means that there are no additional costs related to an ORM strategy. With regards to the time frame, since the resources are already owned by the client, the strategy can be directly implemented.

#### 7.4 Implementation plan

This chapter presents the implementation plan of an ORM strategy by the means of a PDCA-cycle.

The elaboration of strategy 2 is elaborated into an implementation plan. This plan is conducted by the means of the PDCA-cycle (presented in appendix III, figure III.II) which coordinates the progress of the implementation. The cycle is intended to control the change process of the ORM strategy. The PDCA stands for plan, do, control and act (The art of Management, 2017). Plan describes the objective of the strategy. Do is the performing of the ORM strategy which describes the resources needed to realize the objective. Check compares the actual results with the results that were planned and to analyze the progress of the implementation. The last stage analyzes what measures must be taken to realize the new objective.

##### Plan

In order to begin with the implementation of the ORM strategy 2, the resources and investments needs to be evaluated. As stated in the description of the strategy, the resources needed consists of an online community manager and the software tool. However, the first step towards implementing the strategy, is to communicate the new plan within a company meeting so that everybody is aware of the new development. Below is the aim of the strategy written with the actions taken to accomplish the strategy.

- The aim of the strategy is to make the service more personalized in order to create favorable sentiments. This increases the amount of positive online reviews.
  - o The operational team is responsible to place the small amenity within the campervan and to call their customers to make sure that there are satisfied. Make sure that problems are resolved before departure, ask about their experience during the check-out.
- The aim of the strategy is to encourage consumers to publish an online review to increase the quantity of reviews on the review platforms TripAdvisor and Google Reviews.
  - o Ask for reviews during the check-out process by providing them a small card and send them a reminder by e-mail after two days of their stay.
- The aim of the strategy is to constantly monitor the online reviews by the means of a software tool which is managed by an online community manager.
  - o The online community manager is responsible for the performance of the client's brand on TripAdvisor and Google Reviews. This means that the person is in charge to respond to all the positive and negative reviews and process them within the company. However, strategy 2 stated the additional feature proposed within the tool meaning that the internal survey should be analyzed as well. In case of a negative survey, the online community manager is responsible to contact the consumer and provide a solution to the issue.
- The aim is to respond to all the positive and negative reviews since it increases the trustworthy of consumers.
  - o The online community manager is responsible to answer in a professional and personalized manner to all the positive and negative reviews within 24 hours. Both types of reviews should start with a thank you to the reviewer for their time and effort to write a review. However, negative reviews have the priority meaning that they should be handled first.
- The aim is to arrange a weekly meeting to discuss the negative and positive reviews which will be translated into a plan of action.

- The online community manager is responsible to communicate the main negative and positive reviews within the meeting. Within this meeting a plan of action will be set to improve the online complaints and to keep track on the successes. The online community manager is responsible to personally contact the reviewer with a complaint and provides them a solution.

## Do

The resources related to conducting the strategy is the online community manager and the software tool. These are the two elements needed to realize the objective of the client. However, it is one of the easiest approaches to implement since the resources are already applied by Apollo.

The online community manager is responsible to carry out the ORM strategy and to measure its successes. This means that clear objectives should be determined and being established within the first month of implementing the strategy. These guidelines are as follows:

- All the positive and negative online reviews have to be responded within a professional, personalized manner within 24 hours, so increasing the respond rate to 100%
- An increase in the quantity of reviews with 15%
- 20% of the consumers filled in the internal survey
- 85% of the customers received a reminder through e-mail to write a review

Above goals are based on the literature studied and the results of the field research. Since the client is not responding to all their reviews and mostly with an automatic message, the focus area is to increase the respond rate to 100% with a personal message. As confirmed by Nguyen (2015), it enhances customer trust which positively impact the sales. In addition, the interviews with experts indicates that an increase in sales is hard to measure. Cornell University Studies confirmed that a business can measure the sales monthly through analyzing the occupancy rate. However, many factors might influence the occupancy rate, for instance the season to travel, but Cornell University Studies stated that effectively managing online reviews might increase the occupancy rate with up to 0,54%. So, if the client faces a better online reputation and the occupancy rate is increased, it can be said that the cause are the online reviews.

## Check

The online community manager is responsible for the first analysis of the strategy objectives. This will be monthly evaluated in order to analyze the performance of the strategy and to compare the results of the goal set. The tool required is the software system that provides statics of the online performance of the client. If the goals are achieved it means that the online community manager should set new objectives for instance, increasing the quantity of reviews with 30%. If not, new tactics should be determined in order to achieve the goal for the next month.

## Act

If there is a difference between the objectives set and the obtained objectives, a reinvestigation will be conducted to examine the areas of improvements to make sure that the next month the objective of the strategy will be achieved. This should be discussed within a company meeting where all the managers involved provide a solution. Once the solution is determined, the client should start follow the PDCA-cycle from the beginning in order to keep track on the performance.

## 7.6 End conclusion

**This chapter provides an answer to the management question.**

The aim of the advisory part is to improve the online reputation of the client and subsequently an increase in the number of bookings. The theoretical framework has confirmed the connection between online reputation and sales. This means that the focus area to provide an answer to the management question is with the aim of an improvement in online reputation and financial growth by implementing an effective ORM strategy. This will be achieved by implementing the previously described implementation plan.

*‘What is the best way for Apollo Motorhome Holidays to manage their online reviews to improve their online reputation and increase in bookings?’*

Based on the research results, the best way to effectively manage online reviews is to follow the five aspects of the ORM model, which is presented in appendix III, figure III.I. Through conducting field research, the researcher received in depth information into the aspects which provides sufficient input to formulate two proposed ORM strategies for the client.

The most suitable strategy was selected on a criterion of financial implications, time, favorable sentiments and the objective of the advice. Based on this criterion, strategy 2 was selected as it meets the objective of effectively conducting an online review management strategy which is generating a higher customer satisfaction, an improvement in positive online reviews, increase in sales and finally, increase in revenue. Moreover, the strategy can be implemented within the time frame set since the resources are recently applied by the client of hiring an online community manager and integrating a software tool. This means that the client is aware of the financial costs from the resources required.

To summarize the proposed strategy, the first two steps within the strategy should be carried out by the operational team who is responsible for providing a personalized amenity in the campervan and seeking for real-time feedback during the customer’s stay. The second step is to encourage customers to write an online review through providing them a small card and sending a reminder through e-mail two days after their stay. The last three steps should be carried out by one person, the online community manager who is responsible to reply and monitor the online reviews, arranging the weekly meetings and providing solutions to negative reviews.

The total cost of conducting the ORM strategy 2 is calculated to be AUS\$56,641 a year for the annual salary of an online community manager. The second costs calculated are related to technological equipment which is the software tool. The annual costs of the tool are calculated to be AUS\$5,520. This means a total cost of  $\$56,641 + \$5,520 = \text{AUS } \$62,161$ . In addition, no extra costs are related to implementing an ORM strategy since the client needs to interact effectively with its customers to receive more positive online reviews. However, the monthly expected costs are presented in table 3.

## 8. Afterword

**This is the last chapter of the thesis report which provides a reflection about the personal development, planning and organization and collaboration with other people during this thesis project. Lastly, it also reflects on the value of this study for the industry as general.**

This thesis assignment is the last project to accomplish in order to graduate for the degree of Hotel Management. In September 2018 I started writing the thesis for Apollo Motorhome Holidays, located in Brisbane, Australia. Unfortunately, after two months I had to stop due to personal reasons. In February 2019 I continued to write my TPD which I accomplished within five weeks and with an eight as a result. This mark gave me a boost of motivation to write the thesis. During the thesis project I have experienced a number of ups and downs and especially the last two weeks before the deadline meaning I constantly had to deviate from my planning. As a result, two days before the deadline I still had to accomplish the advisory part and the management summary. This gave me a lot of stress and unsureness which made it difficult to fully focus. However, I am satisfied that I was able to write my thesis the last six months because even though I have experienced difficult periods, I truly enjoyed learning about this subject.

Finding the right subject for the thesis assignment went well. In collaboration with the marketing manager, Tara Eller, I have found the topic for the thesis that attracted me the most. The reason why the topic interests me is because I am active in writing online reviews. According to my opinion, companies can learn from each feedback and also deserve a reward when their product or service was excellent. I do like to help companies by providing them feedback and to inform other readers about their services. That is why I like to advice the client to improve their online reputation since I know how powerful online reviews influence it.

I have gained sufficient information and more knowledge about an ORM strategy. I was aware about companies asking the consumers to publish an online review. For instance, based on my own experience, after having a dinner in a restaurant the employee does ask to publish an online review. However, I received more in-depth information into the motives of the reviewers. For instance, that their purchase decision is based on how a business respond to their online reviews. Therefore, I could propose an alternative to the client to let them respond to all their positive and negative reviews. Additionally, it provided me knowledge about creating remarkable experience in which reviewers are motivated to publish an online review when their stay was extreme. This means that it was either above or below expectations. I was not aware that the motive to write an online review starts from this point of view.

With regards to field research, I have contacted more than twenty experts through phone call. Most of the times I had to send an e-mail with the request and only six of them were interested. I was hoping to conduct two interviews more since the first interview was carried out with a trainee while an appointment was set with the marketing manager. Even so I have received useful information from this interview. The six interviews with the experts were planned within one week. The interviews were transcribed immediately after the assembly in order to analyze if more in-depth information is required. The interviews with the reviewers and the client was planned within 1.5 week and in between the interviews were encoded as well. Reflecting on the interviews, I am satisfied about the planning and the received information since it provides in-depth information into an ORM strategy. I have received information which I could not find within the literature review which makes the thesis assignment interesting. However, a point of improvement is for conducting the interviews itself. During the interviews I could have gone deeper into the information provided. For instance, I have received information about implementing a survey and during the interviews I was convinced that it was not related to an ORM strategy, so I did not ask for specific information. After encoding two interviews I realized that it is useful information since it is a tool to avoid negative reviews. Finally, I had the possibility to ask for this tool during the subsequent interviews.

The process of analyzing and transcribing the interviews went well since I could perform it easily independently. Additionally, I have changed two research questions since they were already confirmed within the theoretical framework. I have sent the research questions to my marketing manager for an approval and she was satisfied with it. I can confirm that I am satisfied with the intensity of the contact with my marketing manager. I have updated her constantly through e-mail and I have called twice to provide an update of the thesis and the personal circumstances. After accomplishing the research results, I have asked my first examiner, Tatiana Alekseeva, for feedback which was above expectations. I started to be in doubt about the answer to the research questions and the content and structure of the research results. My first examiner provided a clear feedback after one day so I could easily adjust it. Besides, I was expecting a negative feedback, but after all it was acceptable. The advisory part is the chapter in which I have been struggling with the criterion of the proposed alternatives. Reflecting on this part I could have approached my first examiner to ask for advice instead of being in doubt and finding a solution independently. The advisory part was also a difficult chapter for me due to the willingness of finish it in combination with not feeling well.

With regards to collaborate with other people, I think I have been very fortunate. First of all, I received many supports from my marketing manager who constantly assisted me during the thesis project. In addition, she has always shown interest in my thesis assignment and gave me the data I needed for the research. Concerning the communication with my first examiner, I believe I could have updated her more about my personal circumstances since my situation was not stable. Although the contacts we have had, Mrs. Alekseeva always gave me the support I needed, and I am thankful for her proceedings. Speaking about the value of the thesis for the general industry, this thesis assignment is useful for the tourism industry since online reviews are set as a powerful tool and have an impact on the online reputation. The online reviews in the hospitality industry has reached an overdone level meaning that travelers rely on the online reviews and certainly impact their purchase decisions. This thesis assignment can be implemented by each business within the tourism industry since the process of managing online reviews is for every company the same. Online reviews are nowadays are trend and will undergo certain developments within the future. This means that an investigation into this subject should be continued. However, this thesis assignment is relevant for the experts as well since they can benefit from the outcomes of the project. First of all, they can compare their results with their competitors in order to analyze their successes and improvements. Additionally, the reviewers clarify their motives to publish online reviews meaning that the experts can respond to these needs. Furthermore, this study is based on scientific literature provided with examples of ORM practices stated by investigators. Thus, experts can benefit from the results of the interviews and the provided theory.

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## Appendix I Search methods

Search engines	Search terms	Title of article(s)	Author	Year	Criteria
Google Scholar	Online consumer reviews	The effect of negative online consumer reviews on product attitude: An information processing view.	Lee, J., Park, D.H., & Han, I.	2007	AAOCC- criteria
Google Books	Online review response strategy	Online review response strategy and its effects on competitive performance.	Lui, W.W., Bartosiak, M., Piccoli, G., & Sadhya, V.	2018	AAOCC- criteria
	Online review strategy	Five Stars - Putting Online Reviews to Work for Your Business. 1st Edition. Sybex, a Wiley Brand.	Couzin, Grativa & Grappone.	2014	AAOCC-criteria
Google	Online review management strategy	Online review management in hotel industry	Nguyen, K.	2015	AAOCC- criteria
	Online review management strategy	What A 5-Star Review Management Strategy Actually Looks Like.	Erskine, R.	2017	AAOCC-criteria
	Online review management strategy	How to Build a Better Review Marketing Strategy	Andersen, I.	-	AAOCC-criteria

## Appendix II AAOCC-criteria

AAOCC- criteria	Source: Online review response strategy and its effects on competitive performance.
Authority	The article is written by the authors Lui, W.W., Bartosiak, M., Piccoli, G., & Sadhya, V.
Accuracy	The authors developed a dataset to research 39 properties that meets the requirement for international hotels in Taiwan.
Objectivity	The research is written for the tourism industry to advice how to respond managerial to online reviews. The research is substantiated with a numerous of sources.
Currency	The article is published in 2018.

AAOCC- criteria	Source: Five Stars - Putting Online Reviews to Work for Your Business. 1st Edition. Sybex, a Wiley Brand.
Authority	The article is written by the authors Couzin, Gradiya & Grappone.
Accuracy	The authors are founding partners at Gravity Search Marketing. It is an SEO and social media consulting company. They consulting and customized strategies.
Objectivity	The book is written to achieve a proper online presence on the search engines. It advises how companies can improve their online presence.
Currency	The article is published in 2014. Information is relevant.

AAOCC- criteria	Source: Online review management in hotel industry
Authority	This article is written by Nguyen, K who finished the master International Business.
Accuracy	Data is collected from interviews with experts. Besides, the research is substantiated with sources that support the findings.
Objectivity	The research is written for the marketing in the hotel sector. The author developed an online review management model based on scientific literature and interview with experts.
Currency	The article is published in 2007 which means the source is 12 years old. The article is not up to date, but the topic is still a discussed subject and so relevant for this report.
Coverage	The article is about developing an online review management model to support the hotel industry to deal with their online reviews. This provide guidelines and knowledge for this thesis report.

## Appendix III Models

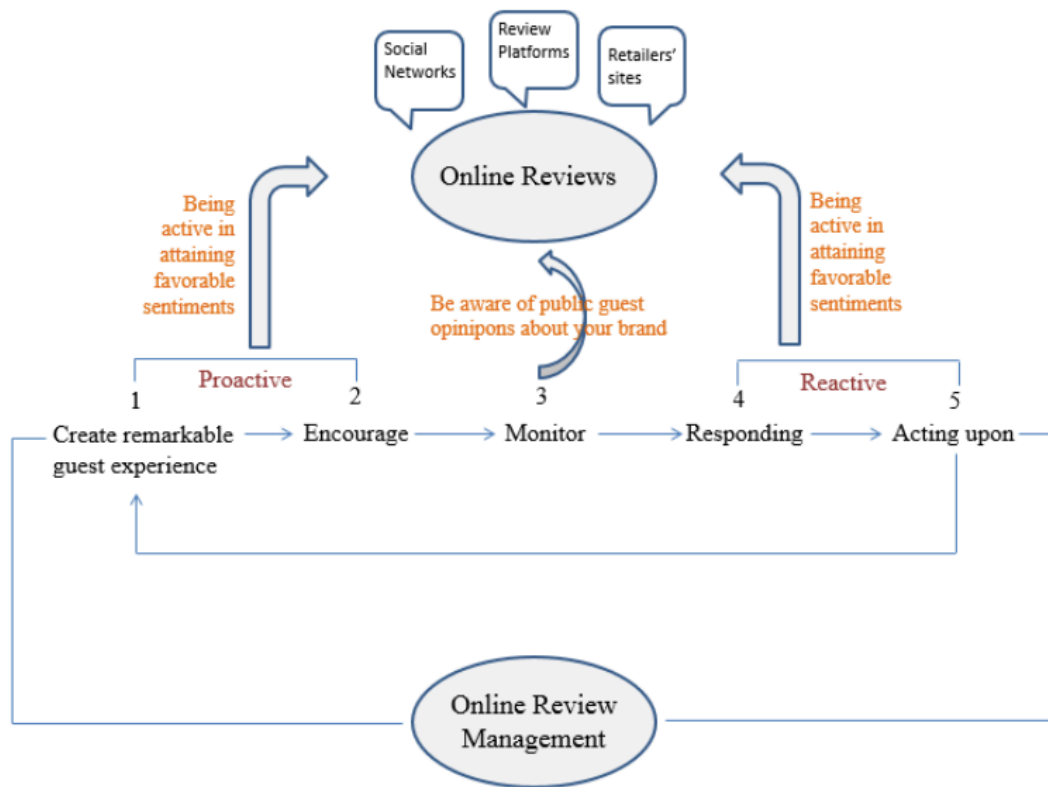


Figure III.I.; Online Review Management model (Source: Nguyen, 2015)

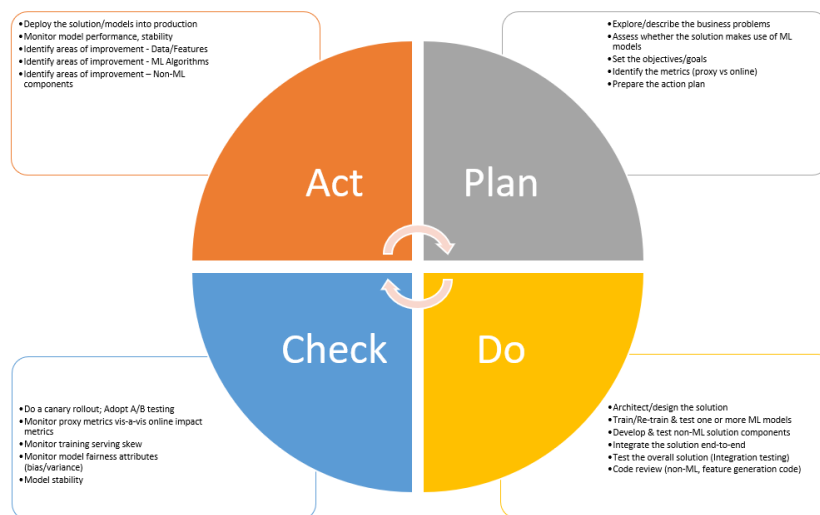


Figure III.II.; Plan Do Act Control (PDCA) – cycle

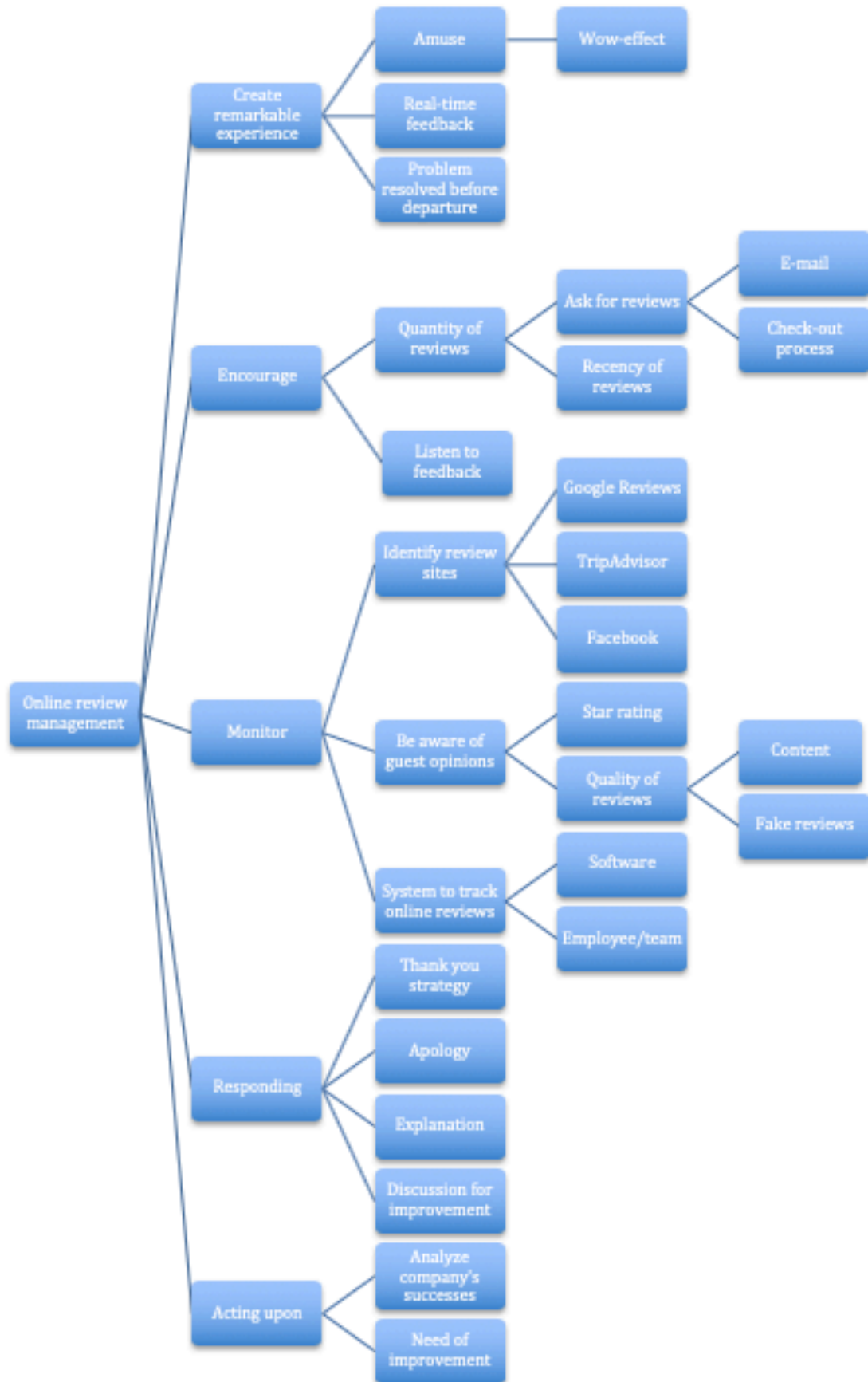


Figure III.III; Operationalization core concept

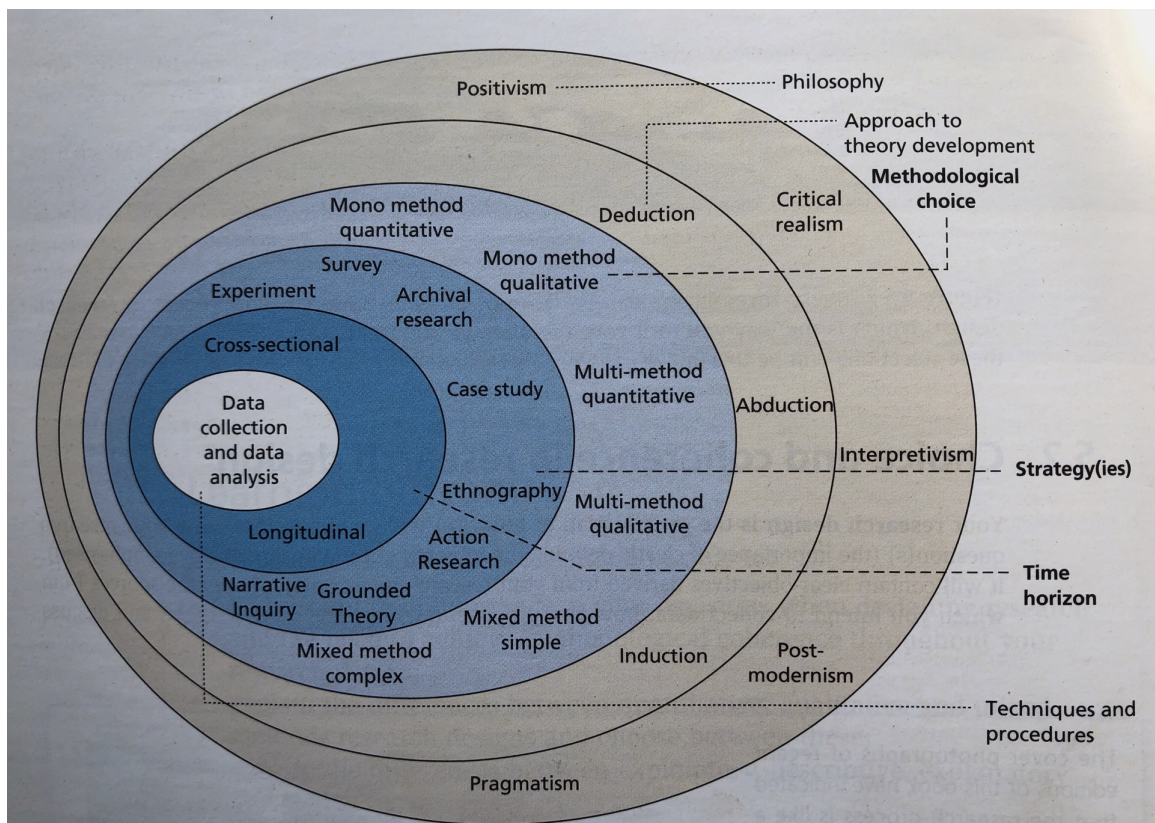


Figure III.III; Research onion (Source; Saunders, 2016)

## Appendix IV Interview guides

### **Interview guide experts & employee client**

Company:

Name interviewee:

Date:

### **Introduction**

My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30–45 minutes and will be recorded.

### **Interview questions**

1. From the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that? And why in your opinion it is so important?

2. The literature confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

What is the influence of online reviews on your sales? Do you measure this? If so, how?

3. Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you.

A. Create remarkable experience

The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience.

- What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

B. Encourage

The encourage part is about the quantity of reviews. It involves asking the customers to publish an online review.

- Do you encourage online reviews? If so, how? And does it work?

C. Monitor

The monitor part involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers.

- The reviews on which platforms influence your sales and online reputation the most?
- What are for you the necessary features of an effective ORM platform?
- Have you experienced fake reviews? How do you recognize those? And how do you deal with it?
- Who are the main responsible for carrying out an ORM strategy? Team/1 person

D. Responding

I noticed that on Facebook you are responding to almost of all your reviews. Some of the reviews are not responded while another reviewer provides the same star rating/comment. Why? I also saw that you are responding limited to the reviews on Google Reviews and TripAdvisor, why?

E. Action upon

This stage is about analyzing the company's successes and need of improvement.

- How do you process the online reviews? Will they be communicated to the team or are they discussed in some company meetings? Why?

4. Which challenges do you face of conducting an ORM strategy?

5. What are the costs of conducting an ORM strategy?

I know that an implementation of an ORM implies the cost of an online community manager and software. Am I missing something?

6. Is there something you would like to add concerning ORM?

### Interview guide – reviewers

Name reviewer:

Date:

### Introduction

My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for the client of my report. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about what reviewer's appreciate concerning online reviews. The interview will take 15-20 minutes and will be recorded.

### Interview questions

1. From the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online review influence your purchasing decisions? *For instance, star rating, total amount of positive/negative reviews, content of reviews, how the company react on reviews?*

2. The literature confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

3. Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you.

**A. Create remarkable experience**

The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience.

- What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

**B. Encourage**

The encourage part is about the quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms. It also involves that companies have to ask their customers to publish an online review.

- What motives you to write an online review? Why?
- What technique does a company have to use to encourage you to write an online review? Why? *"For instance, do they have to ask you by sending e-mail or during the check-out process".*

**C. Monitor**

The monitor part involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers.

- What type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews? Why?

**D. Responding**

The responding part involves how a company should react to their reviews.

- How would you liked to get responded to your review? Why? *For instance, personal or automatized respond. Only to the negative or positive reviews or both?*

**E. Action upon**

This stage is about analyzing the company's successes and need of improvement.

- What would you like to see how companies are dealing with your online review?  
Why?

*"For instance, if you have a complaint about their service, do you expect to receive a discount on your following purchase? Or a refund?"*

4. Is there something you would like to add concerning ORM?



## Appendix V – Interview transcripts experts and reviewers

### Interview transcript 1

**Company:** Hotel Okura  
**Interviewee (IE):** Roos Dijkema  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 12-04-2019

#### Introduction

IE: Welcome by my interview. My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at the Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and its concerned about its online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about an online review management strategy to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30–45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself a bit?

IE: From the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that? And why in your opinion it is so important?

IR: Well, if you look at yourself, if you want to book a hotel or do an activity you always look online what the reviews say because you want to hear other opinions as well. So for all guests or business that come to our hotel, I do not know exactly the percentage but most of them have probably Googled us or searched on TripAdvisor or have seen us online and watched to the reviews before make the decision to come here.

IE: And do you see that in returned customers?

IR: Well, it is really hard to measure because you do not know. You cannot see the journey and what the guest thinks but of course you notice it as well in the sales and if they return. I mean, if you have only bad reviews, probably less guests will come than when you have good reviews.

IE: Yes and before you were saying that you cannot measure but somehow you see it back in the sales. Can you also explain how you see it back in the sales?

IR: It is more logical thinking about customer behavior. You cannot measure it because you do not know exactly what the guests thinks. What motives them to come back. You know the city can be a big motivational meant to come here but it can also be that they like the Okura because they have been to Okura in Japan because they heard good stories of other people (word to mouth) or because they like the website. You know, you do not know what motivates them. In order to measure it, you should almost ask every guest how important it is to them and if they watched reviews and that is just not visible to do. But of course, when you are a high in the ranking of TripAdvisor because you have only good reviews and they only grade you with good grades. It will be more tempting for the people to come to your hotel than a hotel that ranked really bad.

IR: And do you also measure the sales of the online reviews? Or is it included in the software package you have? Like you have a certain percentage?

IE: No because you cannot measure it.

IR: Out of my research I concluded that an online review management strategy consists of five aspects. I would like to speak about each aspect with you. The first one is create remarkable experience. The first part of the literature it says that people have to know about what to review and it appears creating remarkable experience. What in your opinion is a remarkable experience?

IE: You know you have a lot of five-star hotels so what makes one five-star hotel better than the other one. Theoretically the same facilities. For example, the size of the room or a swimming pool etc. But what makes the difference is doing the small things which makes guest extra happy so personal attention. [1.1 Problem resolved before departure] An exceptional experience is also to strive that every guest leaves happy. It is very important that If they leave, someone of guest relations or front office ask "How was your stay, did you liked it?". You should check if everything is ok and sometimes when they leave, they become angry.

IR: And how do you create this experience during their stay? So how do you satisfy them?

IE: [1.2 Personalization] You have to set the extra mile, taking an extra step and doing the best you can. You do not say no to a guest, but you want to make their best stay possible. For example, a wedding or they mention in the restaurant that they have heard about the birthday celebration and they stay in the hotel. We try always to write a card of the general manager or place some small amenities in their room or putted in their profiles so if someone else comes, they can congratulate them and when they have something they are unhappy about and they check-out, [1.3 Problem resolved before departure] we always try to make them leave with a good feeling. So, when they are really angry about something, we try to solve the problem. If they feel better with a compensation, we might see if we can arrange something on their bill or if they want to talk to a supervisor or manager, we see if we can make that happen. And sometimes, in really bad cases, they leave, and we have duty lock. That is everything in the front office that happens in a day and they write it down, the time, the guest issues and the action that has been taken and they always send it to the page a program of the hotel, like a Facebook page of the hotel and everybody can see it. And sometimes when a guest leaves angry, they send it to an executive office and then we see if we can make the guest happy again. If they really had a bad experience, we first researched what happened internally and if we conclude we missed some points and made some really bad mistakes, we sometimes give them an upgrade, sometimes a complimentary night in order to show what normally spoken a stay in the Hotel Okura is look like and what our standards is. It is all about trying to make the guest happy before he thinks I am going to put this online. Because if they put it online a review when they angry, you cannot do anything anymore because 99% the guest is not going to review of again. So, it is all about going to the extra mile for the guest and make sure they have a good stay and fixing their problems before they have the feeling, they need to fix it themselves.

IR: Thank you. The second part is the encourage part and it is going about the quantity of reviews. So, it involves asking the customers to publish online review. Do you encourage online reviews? And how?

IE: [1.4 Ask for reviews] We have small cards with 'please leave your comment on TripAdvisor'. [1.11 Survey] We sent the guest an Medialla survey, a small survey with questions their stay was like because we are member of leading hotels in the world and to become a member you need to score 86% on that survey. They also do misery visits to the hotel and then you need to score a certain percentage as well. And then they can in a survey if we want to contact them or not and if they say yes we need to contact them within a certain amount of hours and if left a positive review we always say please make other people as enthusiast as you are and publish the comment on TripAdvisor.

IR: And do you think it helps to encourage the people? Do you really think they are publishing their online reviews online because you asked for it?

IE: Yes, but I do not know how many because you cannot measure why they do it.

IR: And the third part of an online review management strategy is about monitoring. And monitoring means being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of the customers. The reviews on which platforms influence your sales and online reputation the most? So which review platform are you mainly focusing on?

IR: So we have a few. [1.5 System to track reviews] The system we used is called Trustyou and it is a program that makes an overview of TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Hotels.com, Expedia and Agoda and maybe some more but we do not use that ones. It makes an overview of all the reviews you get on those websites and then you have dashboard with an overview of the amount of reviews you got in total, the amount of reviews you got per channel and occupation. Your own response rate per channel and in total. The highlights; the best three rated things, the worst rated things and they also have an inbox with all the reviews, and via that program you can respond to every review. Well, via that program you can see which are on the best rated and the worst rated and you can also see the difference in time like last year, this year and year-to-date, last months, last three months. You can also find the data of your biggest competitors. You have to put your own competitors in the system, and it analyzes what is already online. If they write a review it marks the good words green and the bad words red. That's how they measure it. [1.6 Respond strategies] We notice every review that comes in, we look at it and the good ones, we do not always reply but we try to reply to the bad ones.

IR: Why?

IE: Because sometimes it is a little about your feeling. Sometimes you have the feeling that the guest is really feeling bad and having an issue and you want to make that right. Sometimes the guest thinks something and then you look at it and there is no way to make it right again. It is not worth going into an argument and respond to it. For example, two days ago we received a review on Google saying that the architecture of the building is really idiot, but the sushi is nice and then we looked at it and we thought; what are we going to respond? The architecture is idiot? So then it is better to ignore it than going into a discussion with the customer and a lot of times when they have a complaint we always try to show confession like sir we are really sorry that this happened to you, we will pick this up internally to change it in the future. Some of the reviews we respond like that. To the bad reviews we answer with an apologize, an understanding. You know you have guidelines for it. On the really bad ones, we think, how could have this happened? We ask them to make contact with us personally. Most of the times because we want to offer them something to show them we take them seriously and to give them a positive feeling about their experience instead of a bad one. But it is really hard when they post it online because then you cannot do anything anymore. They have to contact you personally to say something because we do not always know who the guest is. For example, Booking.com is really useful because we can see their booking number in our own system and then we can contact them personally and then we can put on Booking.com; thank you for your reviews, we are very sorry to hear this. We contacted you personally but if they put a review on TripAdvisor, we cannot contact them so the most we can do on TripAdvisor is to say sorry.

IR: And coming back to the reviews, are you responding to all of all the positive online reviews as well? And why is that so?

IE: It has been researched. [1.6 Respond strategies] We try to respond to a lot because you want to people see that we take care about our guests. Researched has shown that the effect of responding of 20–40% to reviews and responding to 100% of the reviews, there is no difference. It does not matter. Why responding to 100% if it takes a lot of time and it does not matter.

IR: And coming back to the software you are using at the moment. Which review platform is currently the most important for hotel Okura?

IE: Probably TripAdvisor.

IR: And why TripAdvisor? And not booking.com?

IE: I know Google is very upcoming so it will become more important. We always have daily meetings on every department. They analyze TripAdvisor, but we also have Medailla but that is survey of leading hotels in the world and that one analyzes the ratings and how good we do it on average. Actually, I do not know how to answer these questions because we use Trustyou for the reviews, so we not only use TripAdvisor or only Booking.com but I think more people are searching on TripAdvisor.

IR: And coming back again to the software. What are for you the necessary features of the software? So, it is mainly the star rating or the quantity of reviews? Or the quality of reviews?

IE: I think the rating because, look at yourself, do you like at the stars or how many reviews a hotel has. It does not matter how many reviews you have but the star rating is more important and of course how many bad reviews you have and how many good reviews you have.

IR: A lot of companies also recognize fake reviews. For instance, customers never experience the service or the product of the company itself. They just like to complain about a company. Have you ever experienced fake reviews?

IE: Well, as I already said. We see every review that comes in. [1.12 Review platforms] We also have a social media manager who sees all social media reviews and then with Trustyou we see all the reviews that comes in of Google, booking.com, TripAdvisor. So, of every review, you know the good ones are amazing and nice and you do not have to do anything with them but with the bad ones we think, what happened, are we aware of the problem. We always send it to a certain department. We check if it is a known problem and we have the duty lock as well which stays everything that happens every contact the front office has with the guest can be of impact. We most of the time recognize every review, sometimes it does not say the name but then we know the duty lock says this so it will be that person. Since I am here, for four months, I have only once a review and nobody knew where it was coming from and we still do not know it.

IR: So apparently it is a fake review?

IE: Well, it does not have to be. [1.7 Fake reviews] We have no information about the guest, he did not make a reservation, we do not know his name. He identified Google so we know his name but the name is not in our system, not in the hotel system, not in the restaurant system, not in our employee system. First we thought that it could be someone of an agency but then we checked also the employee system and we do not know. But almost never we have fake reviews because we always recognize.

IR: Who are the main responsible of carrying out an online review management strategy? It is just 1 person or is it a team?

IE: Of course, you are with the team responsible that the guest leaves happy and that their experience is good.

IR: If we are speaking about managing online reviews itself, do you think 1 person needs to be in charge of it or 1 team?

IE: Well, [1.8 System to track reviews] the things is that his is discussable. For 10 years there is no clear structure. The duty managers respond to the F&B outlets so all the restaurants.

IR: But he is also using the Trustyou software for that? So everyone is in the same system and each department react on its reviews related to the department or?

IE: No, the duty manager is doing reviews because he is also very active in the F&B outlets. We also have a F&B lock with all the complaints and then the duty manager sees if she can contact the supervisors or see in the system who it was. And the executive office is responding to all hotel complaints and we are responding out of the name of the General Manager with approval of course.

IR: Are there also sometimes meetings in which you discuss the online reviews? For instance, about the negative one because the service was bad, and you are discussing this and try to find some improvements.

IE: [1.9 Analyze business' success and improvements] What we do if there is a bad review, we email the department involved with we received this review, please give some input about what happened so I can send a correct answer to the guest. And they respond about what they know about their story, they know give their information and then at the executive office we talk about what happened, what do we know, how are we going to make the guest happy again. So, I send an email to the department head but if it is for example Medialla, you have to respond with a certain amount of time on Social Media on every platform they expect you to respond fast, at least within a few days. And if it takes too long, I am going to the department head itself and to ask what happened and they often do it immediately or sometimes they have to ask their supervisor. And then we have a department meeting every month and then we discuss the year-to-do highlight of Trust you, the three worst mentioned things and the top three. And recently we started a quality circle and they have all access to Medialla and Trustyou and they are all looking which complains we see more often, why it happens and can we do something about it.

IR: Could you give me an example how you are solving that problem? For instance, if a customer has an online complaint you have that process of communicating within the organization but how are you going to improve it so how are you going the guests that you improved their complaint?

IE: It depends, most of the times when they have a complaint it is occasionally, if they have a complaint about the service, yes sorry, indeed that person should have done better. It really depends, if they have a complaint about the refurbishments about rooms or the interior of the rooms or the noise of the elevator, then we say: we a very sorry but we are working on it. We are always refurbishing rooms, last year we did two floors, the years before we did two floors. The guest was in a room which was not renovated, I am sorry, but we are working on that and that is true. With regards to the elevator, we are trying to find a solution. However, we cannot guarantee that when the guest come back within two months that the problem is solved. We can only put a trace in their system, like a pop-up, place the guest in the room far away from the elevators.

IR: Let's come back to the responding part. I know we already discussed if you are responding to the negative and positive reviews, but I noticed that on Facebook you are responding to almost of all your reviews. Some of the reviews are not responded while another reviewer provides the same star rating/comment. Why? I also saw that you are responding limited to the reviews on Google Reviews and TripAdvisor, why?

IE: Because [1.10 Respond strategies] on Social Media, at least on Facebook and Instagram, interaction between the company and guest is very important so if you respond to all your comments, you will end up higher in search results. So that is why it is very important on Social Media to respond to every complain. So actually, Social Media is a bit separated from Booking, TripAdvisor etc because Social Media can be more personal and casual.

IR: This were actually the five aspects we discussed of an online review management strategy. I am just curious about the costs of an online review management strategy. Do you know how much it cost?

IE: No, [1.11 ORM costs] I do know we pay for Trustyou because all good marketing analysis program are paid. I think online reviews is just about trying to deliver the best product possible. Trying to use their complaints to improve. So, first, show confession and try to improve.

IR: Is there something you would like to add concerning an online review management strategy?

IE: No.

IR: Thank you for your time and patient.

IE: You are welcome.

## Interview transcript 2

**Company:** Hotel Intercontinental Amstel hotel  
**Interviewee (IE):** Roland Schaap  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 16-04-2019

### Introduction

*IR:* My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Science in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself?

*IE:* Yes of course. My name is Roland Schaap and I am the marketing executive of the Intercontinental Amstel hotel Amsterdam. I have been here for two months now and I am actually dealing with everything that deals with PR and communication of the Amstel hotel and international levels.

*IR:* Thank you. Now we are going to the first interview question and from the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that?

*IE:* In some ways certainly.

*IR:* And how?

*IE:* Well, if you are a business and you have guests or clients coming in and buying your products and everything so everything has to do with that they can respond to. If they are positive about your product than they will promote it better. So, it is always good to have a positive promotion in that sense.

*IR:* And from the literature it also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of the company. Do you share this statement?

*IE:* Again, in some way. It is not as black as white as mentioned in the literature. Definitely it has an impact. Negative reviews have an impact on how the company, on the reputation of the company. People read those reviews and people see them. People usually write them themselves. So, there is a certain idea behind the review they write and what other people pick them up they might agree with that or they might form an opinion about the product even though they have not visited it, it will still be there in the minds of people. Therefore, it could result in less sales for example and especially when you have a lot of them. That means the more you have, the bigger the idea is of the company is better, it sales better their product. So in that sense, it definitely has impact.

*IR:* And what is the influence of those reviews of this company? Of the Amstel hotel. Can you measure it?

*IE:* I mean, every company can measure the amount of negative reviews because you see which person or guest, in the case of a hotel, have responded negatively. However, it is difficult to measure it precisely because everything that happens is the perception of the guest. For example, one small thing could go wrong in buying a product which means that everything for the guest has suddenly transported and they do not like anything. So, they will place a negative review online and even though one thing went wrong. And in that sense, it is not precisely measurable and honestly, I would not be able to say now that negative reviews have a direct impact on the sales of a product.

*IR:* Why?

*IE:* In the case of the Amstel hotel, we have lovely reviews and people are super positive about everything. And when a negative review will pop-up it will not directly impact the business because it is one negative review compared to hundreds of positive ones. So therefore, in this case, I don't think it would be measurable.

*IR:* Thank you. And out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

*IE:* Remarkable experience is where a guest or customer comes in and they are treated the way they want to. That can be very different from each person because there is no template for a remarkable experience. Five-star hotels have a certain standard where you need to comply with and those are the basics of a remarkable experience but making something remarkable experience means going out of your way to make it extra special for them. People buy their expensive product, for example, an expensive bag for example. They are expecting a certain service level together with the quality of the product. The same goes for five-star luxury hotels. People go here and they pay a certain price and they are expecting to be treated in a certain way which is the basis and going beyond that and going out of the way to treat them even better than they expect than the basis is a remarkable experience.

*IR:* And how do you do that? Could you give me an example?

*IE:* That's a very good question. [2.1 Personalization] We have personalized amenities on the room that we place for the guest that when they enter the room they have something personal to them tailor to their experience and of course it always about personal attention. [2.2 Problem resolved before departure] When guest check in they will be taking the time to review everything and read through that they have a personal connection with the guest before or during the check-in which means that they should have questions or should there be obstacles that should be resolved before the check-in which eliminates the problem in a later stage during their stay. If their check-in was wonderful than it will be easier to solve things that should be raised during the stay than when their check-in was bad already.

*IR:* Yes exactly and when do you provide those remarkable experience during their stay? So they check in but when they are in the hotel itself, how do you deliver the remarkable experience to them?

*IE:* By each of our colleagues or employees. Every person is dedicated to the service that they are willing to provide to the guest. This can be from saying hi and greeting guest in the hallways to room service and housekeeping providing their excellent service by making up rooms, turn out service, during the breakfast. It is like each moment there should be attention to employees and guests that makes the moments extra special.

*IR:* So if I understand it well it is all about the personal attention to the guests.

*IE:* Yes exactly.

*IR:* And the second part is the encouragement part and it is about the quantity of reviews. It involves asking the customers to publish online reviews on the review platforms. Do you encourage online reviews?

*IE:* [2.12 Ask for reviews] Not necessarily because personally I believe that reviews should come from the guest wanting themselves because they were super happy with their stay. Encouraging people to write reviews can be beneficial if their stay was good. If their stay was average or for example, they buy an average product and you encourage people to share their average experience. This will eventually impact your online reputation as well because for a good online reputation you need a good score, so you need ten or five stars depending on of course the rates and online or average scores impact immediately and especially when you have a small set of competition. That means that an average score have a dramatic impact on the position you have in the market.

We receive reviews everyday which are almost all positive and I think that is the most generic review you can ever get because reviews from people that were incredibly happy about their stay and everything was wonderful. As I said, we rather have those than forcing our people or guest to publish online reviews.

*IR:* And the third part is the monitoring part and it involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. The reviews on which review platforms influence your online reputation and sales the most?

*IE:* That's a fair question. I think I am not able to answer that one because basically [2.3 Review platforms] we have a lot of different websites and review websites that we are located on like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Expedia, Google. So there are always different channels which makes it difficult to measure.

*IR:* Ok and do you use a system to track all those online reviews?

*IE:* Yes we use Revinate.



IR: And what are for you the necessary features of this system? Is it like the star rating or the quantity or quality of reviews?

IE: Well, [2.4 System to track reviews] Revinate is a program which we can see our own score, the balance between negative and positive online reviews but also from the competition. So, you have a competitor set which automatically measures the reviews from other competitions.

IR: Okay and are you dealing with those every day? So are you responding every day to the reviews?

IE: Yes [2.5 Respond strategies] we respond to the reviews every day both positive and negative.

IR: Why?

IE: Because it is all about timing I believe. When people are happy with their stay and they place a positive review, they like being recognized or like they like the response we give them. And people who are less satisfied with their stay, they like being recognized that they feel listened to. Therefore it is for us very important to respond to immediately.

IR: So, on all the review platforms you are responding to all the reviews? Is it not that it takes a lot of time?

IE: It does take a lot of time but that is necessary for building an online reputation and an online platform you want people to engage with. So yes it takes a lot of time but it is very reporting.

IR: And who is the main responsible for conducting an ORM strategy? Is it one team who is always responding to the reviews or is it just one person who is in charge of it?

IE: [2.6 System to track reviews] The marketing department is in charge for that.

IR: And how many people are there involved?

IE: 2.

IR: Ok and could you explain me the process of that?

IE: Sure, [2.7 Analyze business success and improvements] we have different websites that we monitor where reviews come in and those reviews are being analyzed. Seeing what is said in them. From that point on, when the analyzing is done and it usually takes less than a minute because they are not as elaborate, sometimes they are. And then the responses are being created based on what is said in the reviews.

IR: And how do you analyze those online reviews? So, for instance, a guest has a complaint about something. How are you dealing with the negative reviews? How do you improve their complaint?

IE: [2.7] We always ask the guest to contact us because it is a matter of privacy that everything was written online is based on what the guests wants other people to see. Usually we do not have a name or something, but we always encourage our guest to contact us by their response and from that point on we can use request to see what can be improved or what went wrong and how we can talk to them.

IR: Do you discuss this in a meeting? How does this process go?

IE: We just discuss it, not necessarily in a meeting. But sometimes it is just discussed, and the response is drafted and then we discuss we different departments what we can improve. So, it is a continues improvement of the service of the hotel and those kinds of things.

IR: And have you ever experienced a fake review? So people who are just posting something bad about your hotel while they did not stay in the hotel.

IE: Not necessarily. [2.8 Fake reviews] It has happened previously, not here but that people are just posting one star review on TripAdvisor or Google Review without an explanation and then it would be a matter of finding out why or what went wrong or if it is fake or not. So it is a very elaborate process. It can damage your online reputation and especially if nothing is written and usually those would be fake because if people have something to complain they want to elaborate why they rated it so low and they wouldn't just post a 1-star review because when people are unsatisfied with their product, they want people know what they are. So these are usually fake.

*IR:* Okay and how do you deal with it?

*IE:* I do not know. We have not had those. Luckily, I have not been in the position to solve that or deal with that which is a very good thing of course.

*IR:* And coming back to the complaints of the negative reviews, do you provide them a refund or a discount?

*IE:* These are tailored to what have happened and what the guests wants, and we are always in contact with the guests afterwards to see what the best solution would be. I cannot really say something specific.

*IR:* And speaking about the costs of conducting an ORM strategy. I know the implementation of the software package and the persons who are in charge for it. Am I missing something?

*IE:* Well, [2.9 ORM costs] you can make it as elaborate as you want. You can spend as much time as dedicated to online management or online review management systems, a software for example. So those are different elements that can be added or taking out to either, like raise the cost or lower them. We do it our self because we believe that is the most personal solution because we want to feel our guest that they are not responded by an automatic system for example. We believe that everything is about the experience of the guest, before they arrive and when they leave. A part of that is giving a generic response to review.

*IR:* Do you use some standards to respond to the reviews? Or is it always personalized?

*IE:* No, it is always personalized.

*IR:* Which challenges do you face of conducting an ORM strategy?

*IE:* Well, a challenge would be to make the guest feel special. It is not a challenge to make the guest feel special but when you have several reviews written like at the same time then it can feel a little repetitive and when guest would see that, they might have the feeling that it is just an automatic response. I think that would be one of the challenges especially when you want to build a good online reputation. I think being personal is one of the key elements and I think that makes it a little bit more difficult to deal with that. So yes, that would be one of the challenges.

*IR:* Is everything in the hotel aware of the online reputation? So that in the end it is going about the online reputation of the hotel?

*IE:* We do have a board mentioning the online reputation and these are shared but of course not everybody can be aware of what is happening. We all are aware of the service tailored to the guest. So as long we have that in order, people do not have to worry about the online reputation because that is just excellent.

*IR:* How do you analyze your improvements? So for instance, a number of guests are complaining about one specific thing. I assume you want to improve this issue, but how do you analyze it that it is improved afterwards?

*IE:* That is again a fair question. [2.10 Analyze business success and improvements] We do keep track; we keep track of the negative reviews that come in and what they concern. So, these are tracked, that is all I can say about it.

*IR:* This were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

*IE:* Well, what I would like to add is that it is very difficult because for example the product or company that is mentioned is a completely different product and therefore there is a different client and I feel like online reviews are very important to a company or business and it does not matter which business it is but it all depends on the type of guests you have. I think for hotels it is easier to have an online reputation system because they sell something that it is like an experience and people like to share their experiences. For products, it is always a little bit more difficult because a product is very tangible thing. A lot of things can be wrong with a product and therefore I think it is a very personal thing, takes a lot of time but is very rewarded and especially when you have a competitive market and that is what I would like to add.

*IR:* Okay so if I understood you well it is all about the experience the guest had in the hotel. It all starts from there.  
*IE:* Yes.

### Interview transcript 3

**Company:** QO Hotel  
**Interviewee (IE):** Marlon Roosblad  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 16-04-2019

#### Introduction

*IR:* My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Science in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself?

*IE:* My name is Marlon Roosblad. I am a marketing manager at QO Amsterdam also the marketing manager for Persijn, the restaurant and for Juliper & Gin, our kitchen garden and bar.

*IR:* Okay and for how long are you in this job?

*IE:* I am already working here for two years. We have been open for one year and before opening I was involved in the whole set-up of the marketing systems and marketing strategies.

*IR:* Thank you. Now we will go the first interview question. From the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that?

*IE:* That online reviews promoted business? Yes. It can promote and it can destruct your business.

*IR:* And why?

*IE:* The reason behind is that nowadays mostly people before they do their purchase or whatever, they usually go online, and we call they will evaluate their brand they want to purchase. If it is rated and how it is rated. People are a lot of times influenced by their purchase through their own online research.

*IR:* Okay. So, you say actually that the online reviews impact the online reputation of the company?

*IE:* The online reviews are more the capturing of the online reputation.

*IR:* The literature also confirmed that online reviews influence the sales of a company. What is the influence of online reviews on your sales?

*IE:* Well, it's hard to say for us because we are only open for a year.

*IR:* Can you measure it?

*IE:* No not directly. You need to be operated for a longer period that you can measure it.

*IR:* And how can you see it then if you are open for a longer period?

*IE:* It's very difficult to really measure. How and if your online presence positive or negative, what the exact effect is on the sales. Therefore, you need to be able to follow everything that online visitors are doing and to put that kind of system in place, it takes a lot of money and with the current privacy policy and everything you cannot follow everything what a person does. For example, if you would be able to do that you could see really somebody visiting my website, what is the source and where do they go on which website and they can you can see review page, how they are coming back, do they make the booking and then you can make the assumption how it affected the actual conversion. So, it is not an exact science. But yes, reputation is part of the brand and influences the brand and if you want to betray a positive brand while your online presence is saying that you are full of negativity. Then it is more difficult to really create that positive brand awareness.

*IR:* So actually, it has to start from the service in order to create those positive online reviews?

*IE:* Yes.

*IR:* Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

*IE:* It kind of depends. If you look in general what people really appreciate nowadays, and it is regardless which brand it is of kind of product or service that you are selling. People really appreciate a personal approach. When it is personalized that is something people want to really tell their friends or family about because in the end it is not totally correct but that's my view, this is not of the books. My practical view is that people are online to. Let me put it different, before if you went to a place and it was a good experience and you call your friends and family you say, it was a nice place. How was your holiday etc? Now we want to show it to a wider audience that we had a great experience because we are online on Facebook, Instagram and you want to tell them about our experience. It also means for people to express and then come to the part that we all like this personal feeling that we, feeling of being noticed, feeling being seen, feeling of not just a number or not being a guest number 33 and that people are going to the checklist. They want to have a meaningful interaction.

*IR:* And how do you do this at the QO hotel?

*IE:* [3.1 Personalization] For us it is really important to imbedded it in our culture we operate. So, people get the time to really into the personal contact with the guest by not just saying; What is your name? What is your room? Ciao. To have this little interaction that really gives our guest energy and inspiration. Those are things they will talk about.

*IR:* Could you have me an example about the process of the personal approach from when the guest arrives in the hotel and when they check-out? So how do you satisfy their during your stay?

*IE:* Well, the first thing you need to make clear and map out is your guest journey. What are the steps that is the guest going through? Pre-arrival and post stay and those are the moments you set the expectations and during that journey we try to exceed the expectations. So even [3.3 managing expectations] in your pre-arrival communication, don't overpromise things you cannot do, really show them why they have booked here and stayed here but if you need something like information on the city or a bike ride or you need other personal assistants, just let us know we are here to help you. And if you do that, then people feel like okay they really want to help me. Those are the types of things that people will comment on. What we also kind of did, also in my previous job is called an experience guide to really show what is the type of experience that we want our customers to have. Basically saying, what would be the optimal review? What would be that one review if we all read about that one and we say; yes, this is it. And then work backwards and say what would we need to do to make that kind of review possible. So, we would say, if people are 'wowed', that would be a great honor for us and then you can see, okay what do nowadays customers need to be 'wowed'. I mean, a bed is a bed, a hotel is a hotel. How do we differentiate ourselves to actually get that wow feeling? Everybody is providing that great bed; everybody has that bed that they have at home etc. So it is really the people and how you operate, you can differentiate.

*IR:* And do you have an example of that personal approach? Is it like when a guest is having their birthday, do you give him a little present or small amenities on their room?

*IE:* Yes, those types of things we do. [3.2 Personalization] Somebody comes in and checks-in and saying on forehead that she wants to surprise the boyfriend on the birthday and then we do things in the room. We still need to make sure that all our other aspects are great as well.

*IR:* And the second part of an online review management strategy is encouragement and the encourage part is about the quantity of reviews because it is nowadays really important to have a certain amount of reviews on your review platform. Do you encourage online reviews? And how do you do that?

*IE:* [3.4 Ask for reviews] Yes, E-mail.

*IR:* And what are the results of this?

*IE:* Sometimes we can measure it but that's industry information let's say. I think globally, the well-known thing that people are doing even online booking agencies are doing it. Once you go to booking.com, you stay there and you get an email with please could you leave a review or do a survey and for the reviews it is difficult to measure because we do not get the data from a Booking.com. We do not get actual numbers. If we would take the time to really dive in into it. Well, hold on. We need to separate reviews and surveys. Surveys are more internal but the reviews are difficult to measure. It is more or less it is based on the information that you daily get from the review platforms your reviews

are on, like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Google and you can see what the average amount of reviews per day is for a hotel.

*IR:* And the monitor part involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of the customers. Which reviews on which review platforms influence your online reputation and sales the most? So where are you mainly focusing on?

*IE:* It also depends where your customers are coming from. We cannot really say we are focusing on Booking.com because maybe, I do not say that it is, but we only get people through Expedia, so it does not matter to focus on Booking.com. So, you really have to look at where is your mix of reviews are coming from so which sites. Yes, obviously you have those sites connected to OTA's. They are pushing it themselves so if you open Booking you get a booking post with could you please rate your stay. **[3.5 Review platforms]** TripAdvisor is not connected to OTA's. You have Google search as well. People leave comments on Facebook. It really depends on which platforms you are active, and which are those platforms where you most like to get your customers from. So if it is Booking, you really need to focus on Booking.

*IR:* Do you use a system to track those online reviews?

*IE:* Yes, **[3.6 ORM costs]** you have different online reputation management systems. There are a lot of different, also for the hotel industry. We have Revinate, you have a lot. It really depending on the price obviously and what they are offering because usually you do not use those types of systems for reputation because than it would be too expensive because it also depends what are you doing with that information because if you just gather information and you do not do anything with it. It is not necessary. And obviously, depending on the budget you have, maybe in the beginning you can focus on one or two review sites and set up an account there and then just monitor and then you can do it yourself. When it is a larger scale and it comes from different types of review sites, then it is easier to set up that marketing service. I do not know; it really depends on the size of the business.

*IR:* And have you ever experienced fake reviews?

*IE:* We are only open for a year, so it is really hard to say. I do not know. I cannot say.

*IR:* And who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy?

*IE:* **[3.7 System to track reviews]** It depends on the set up and the size of the business. The way we set it up is co-responsible between marketing and communications and the front of house, the operational people because usually a review has to do with something operationally and especially when it is a negative one. Obviously, marketing and communications are not involved in operations so we cannot really address that review so it is a combination of people involved.

*IR:* The fourth part is the responding part and I noticed that you are responding to some reviews so not to all reviews. Why is that so?

*IE:* How did you noticed that?

*IR:* By doing my own research.

*IE:* What did you see?

*IR:* Well, I saw that you mainly respond on the negative online reviews and some on the positive online reviews but not on all of the reviews so I was asking myself, why is that so?

*IE:* Because **[3.8 Respond strategies]** it is very difficult to respond 100% to every reviews. Just of the size of numbers, depending on the period. We had a period that we got 40 reviews per day, that's a lot. Hard to keep on. So what you do, to make sure to respond to all negative reviews. That's usually how it is being done to our industry. You responded to 100% because somebody has a complaint so you need to adjust that because people are also looking to the negative how you respond it to the negative which makes the decision wheatear to say or not with you and on the three we respond 100% and on the four and five depends because that's the sure numbers and you cannot keep up with the numbers.

*IR:* And how do you respond to the negative ones? Is it personalized or it is an automatic response?

*IE:* I think you should avoid the automatic because imagine you have a complaint; you are upset and you send a review and then you get an automatic reply. Then you feel even more upset. So and then, I mean if people do a review and if they continue to post something, it brings your reputation down so

we try to put it in the bucket and do not start an online discussion so try to make the discussion offline as quickly as possible or even through direct mailing or phone but in your review, in your response showing that you have taken that complaint whatever the complaint is, you take it serious. Sometimes we can see if they left their name and we can see in the system who the name is and we try direct contact with the person.

*IR:* And the last part is analyzing the companies' success and the need of improvement but how do you process the online reviews? So how do you analyze it?

*IE:* [3.9 Analyze business success and improvements] We have a reputation meeting set up by weekly or monthly.

*IR:* Okay and how is that process going?

*IE:* You look at the measurables depending we have a system. If you are using an online reputation system and depending on the price of the system. Those systems give you a report, they give analytics where you can see groups of complaints and where you score high or low and based on that we discuss it internally. The person responding to the reviews even if you have an analytics system in place, should be part of your management reputation team. Just by responding and reading reviews, you kind of see patterns, you see trends, you see things, successes and failures. Even if you not have an analytics system. I mean, if you have 50 reviews and 20 are saying whatever is bad then you already know that there is something to improve.

*IR:* And how do you show that you really improved it?

*IE:* If you have a company that is facing a really negative online reputation then you really need to check what are the trends and take a top five of negative trends and see how they can reverse them in their online campaigns and their online messaging. It is also a thing they way, we do not have automatized responses, we do not have an automatic system even when it is a four or five. [3.10 Respd strategies] Each review gave you also an opportunity to show your USP. So, you need to find a smart way in your communications to responding to the reviews. Sometimes a negative rating is that someone does not understand your business so the review also gives you an opportunity to explain your business [3.11 Analyze business success and improvements] but if you start with a real negative online reputation or you already have it. It does not mean something is wrong with your online presence but that something is wrong with your actual business and then if you have and if you have tips it is all about branding it and making people aware in another way, maybe inviting people and have their experience and write a review or a blog. People are more trustworthy of third parties' feedback then if you would say, I am so great. Then it is more inviting other people to say you are great. And once that is picked up and then making sure people are coming back, they actually something positive to write about.

*IR:* And which challenges do you face of conducting an ORM strategy?

*IE:* One of the challenges is time to actually from opening to now, when we have pick up, the more people are coming in, the more reviews you are getting so your time management to actually and internally you are going to respond to and not respond to. That is a very main challenge. Making sure that you have the reputation management in place to make trends actionable instead of saying okay this is wrong. You really need to do something. If it is something occur and it comes back, you really need to do something.

It also making sure that internally and that goes for every brand and the brand has its offline reputation and online reputation, it is just branding so making sure where the brand is all about. [3.13 Analyze business success and improvements] How do you want people to perceive the brand? And then work from there because you do not want your business to led by the online reputation so if it is a negative one you really need to look serious to the business what we are doing wrong. So not what we are doing wrong online but what are we doing wrong offline. And then take that and if the service is bad, okay what can we do to change the service and then yes, the challenge becomes how do we show that the situation that is set online is not set offline. Are we going to send people please come back? That gives them a wrong feeling. How are we going to show knowing the people that doing online research knowing that all those negative reviews will remain online forever? How do you show the case now to people that the situation has changed? And that can be a challenge I think for a lot of businesses and especially if you have a long running negative online reputation. Branding and online reputation works together. Online reputation is also communication and again, the customer journey is about. I am going there so I do my research and what I found, the company is always saying that they are doing great but you want to know what other says about it. So then it is really important that others say a positive thing about you and yes how do you do that? Well, how much money do you have?

What you could do as a company, depending on the budget, is a re-start and you invite people for free or even a discount. Or you let influencers come to do their independent review and really push those people that still are coming to do the reviews and keep responding even if those are negative reviews, even respond to get the word out, the message out. Show them that you take their complaint really seriously. Whatever, to get that message out.

*IR:* Speaking about influencers, you are working with those? And what type of influencers?

*IE:* Then you really need to fit the brand what they are doing because influencers is also a business for them and we not going to invite people that have no connection with the brand even if they have 500.000 followers because we are assuming that those people who are following them, where they stand for and if they stand for something totally different. Yes, they can talk about our brand, but those listeners and followers won't anything more. And again, it is a combination. I mean, influencers, do you need them? I do not know. Do you do it? Yes. It's kind of a mixture because again, the customer journey. People are going online and the first thing you do, I am going to Australia and I need a motorhome. Then either the name comes up to a website which is interesting with a nice pricing. The more you search, the more information you get and if you get a lot of negative information, you said I am going to the next time and if you get a lot of positives you feel connected to those people and you book. So it is a combination. And yes, influencers will work but people are not stupid completely. Not because 1 influencer goes there, you are going there but it helps to spread the word.

*IR:* And what are the costs of conducting an ORM strategy? I know it is the software tool and the people who are charge of it. Am I missing something?

*IE:* No. Again, depending on the size of the company. [3.12 ORM costs] Responding to the reviews you need to do yourself but even nowadays you can hire a company to do it for you but then either you can do it yourself and to make it easier you have an online reputation management system but depending on the budget that you have. So, I do not know. Smaller properties, I think, they do it themselves, but they have less reviews to respond to. The difference is with a software system is like who deals with social media management without an automatic system because then you need to check at Facebook, Instagram and then you have what's written on other types of system while you just can go to one system where you can see everything and that is the same with a review system where you just can go with one system, one check-in and there you see all the reviews from the different sites. Otherwise you need to check-in in Booking.com, expedia. So, it is really depending on the actual numbers.

*IR:* Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

*IE:* It needs to be part of your overall branding strategy because it needs to be separately and [3.13 System to track reviews] it needs to be involved your marketing and branding people, your operational people. It needs to involve some form of management because it could easily be that decisions need to be made and sometimes your negative comments could be that there is something wrong with the service, but it could also be that you need to change something operationally. So, it is not like, people just being rude but operational wise, the guests expectations are different so you need to change in your operation and then a decision need to be made. And I think then you need to reach management we are going to implement it in a different way.



#### Interview transcript 4

**Company:** Wehkamp  
**Interviewee (IE):** Brenda Knoll  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 18-04-2019

#### **Introduction**

IR: My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Science in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself?

IE: Well, I am Brenda Knoll and I am currently working on Boice & Voice that is a review implementation at Wehkamp and this tool gives us more insight into review statistics as well how our users respond to our products.

IR: Thank you. We will go to the first interview question now. And from the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that? Does it influence the online reputation or the sales of the company?

IE: For the sales, we do not have data on this. Currently we just do not have it because there are a lot of influences that have an impact on your conversion. I think conversion is a bigger topic that there are a lot of factors which are involved in conversion. On the other hand, I think it is a good thing for reviews or reviews have a good effect on online reputation. For instance, if you have a negative review, it is always good to response to this customer or to reach out to this customer and understand why he/her is experience was negatively impacted.

IR: Okay but do you think that online reviews influences the sales?

IE: Yes, I do. From research statistics it definitely does, and I also think that when a review has an average rating of three or more stars it definitely impacts your sales. But I think a negative rating of reviews has a negative impact on your sales.

IR: Can you measure it?

IE: Currently for Wehkamp it is a bit hard to measure it but however we do some testing. For instance, we did an A/B test with leaving out reviews on BOP level. That is a product overview page. So, for instance, that is the page when you search for a jean and you see all jeans. There we left out all our reviews. See you for instance on certain categories like electronics and more expensive categories that if you leave out reviews and especially like positive reviews that has a negative impact on sales. So, showing reviews on product overview level has a positive impact on sales when the rating is three or more stars.

IR: Out of my research I concluded that an ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects and I would like to discuss each aspect with you. The first create remarkable experience. It says about what people have to review and in the literature, it appears create remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE: [4.1 managing expectations] I think a remarkable experience is when a product, especially we are discussing now products, that they outperform on expectations because a customer has an expectation about a product based on the description, based on the product description. Its title, price and I think review management expectations.

IR: How do you provide a remarkable experience to your customers?

IE: I think we have to give them the smoothest experience there is. For instance, if they search for something that they get where they searched for and that it is the best product for them so that it is also a bit personalized.

IR: And the second part is about the encouragement part. It is about the quantity of reviews and it involves asking customers to publish an online review. Do you encourage online reviews and how?

IE: [4.2 Ask for reviews] We do this by sending them an e-mail after a purchase. They call it post interactions emails so for instance when a customer has made his or her sale. I think a few days later we send them an email based on what they bought and if the product needs review. We have this identifies by saying you have a chance to win a 100 dollar or euro cheque. So, this is how we promote it. And the other hand, for certain categories, sometimes our products are negatively impacted. For instance, when we have a quality issue. Those we become aware of by the reviews and then we notice that and we really do something with this like making our products better. For instance, when we have our own products or couches. By these improvements we also do a new sweepstake. So we email those customers after a while. For instance, when we improved the product, after three months we do a new sweepstake to email the oldest customers and say like; hey, how do you like our product? And see if there are changes are good changes.

IR: Okay but do you think it really works to encourage customers to publish online reviews?

IE: Yes, I really noticed. If we do not send the email, we only get like 20-30% of all the reviews.

IR: Okay and how do you notice it? Is there a tool for it?

IE: Yes, I can measure this in our review tool.

IR: And the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. The review on which platform sites influence your sales and online reputation the most?

IE: [4.3 Review platforms] It depends on the kind of customer. For instance, when you have customers that search in Google, they are more impacted by Google Reviews. If you have customers who use online comparison sites, they use these tools and these tools also have reviews but those are independent reviews. And I think definitely there is a different impact of reviews. For instance, if a buyer is really convinced of buying certain jeans and sees that these jeans has a lot of negative reviews on site then probably he won't buy the jeans. Not on Wehkamp, not on Zalando. So, he probably will pick another product that is more or better reviewed.

IR: Do you use a certain tool to track those reviews?

IE: [4.4 System to track reviews] Yes, we currently use Boice and Voice and there we get a lot of input from.

IR: Could you explain me the process of the software?

IE: Yes. This software a tool that, for instance, all reviews go to like a big computer and they are based on the principal of NLP (Normal linguistic program). The reviews are read by the computer and for instance all these fools or really bad words are filtered out so if you use swearing or any harassments, these reviews will be filtered out. They will end up, I can see them but they won't be published on our site and there are also human moderators that do like a second control or a second review of the reviews and they read all the reviews. So these are real people who do read all the content and they tag this content with certain codes. So for instance, when it is a customer service issue or when it is a product description issue or it's a fit issue. You have like all these issues, all these tags than can belong to a review and based on this, I will receive all these reviews and all these alerts or all the codes with customer service, they go directly to the customer service.

IR: And who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy? Is it 1 person who is in charge of it or one team?

IE: [4.5 System to track reviews] Right now I am in charge. I would like to roll this out more in our organization, so it carried out by a lot of people and currently there a few departments that are really working with reviews. For instance, the quality department which is responsible for our own clothing or own furniture etc. They also manage their own reviews.

IR: Okay so every department manages their online reviews?

IE: Yes.

IR: And what are you for the necessary features of an ORM platform? Is it like the star rating, the quality of reviews or the quantity of reviews?

IE: Right now our own KPI's are based on the quantity of reviews because we believe that if a product has seven or more reviews in average it will give an uplifting conversion. That's also the research you will read online. What I think what is the best thing about our tool is that this content is tagged and based on this tags it can be shared with a lot of stakeholders so it gives us a lot of insights into our products and to the happiness of our customers and I think that is the most important thing of using this tool.

IR: And how do you respond to the online reviews? Is it with a personal approach or an automatic message?

IE: It's an personal approach but we have to be alerted of these reviews so for instance, [4.6 Analyze business success and improvements] if we get a negative review on some furniture or a sofa. For instance, this review will end up with the buying assistant of this department and they will do for instance, it goes to the quality employee and they will discuss what is going on with this sofa and if this reasonable and they will do a check for instance in the inventory or to see what the quality is or anything and they give me feedback on this matter and then I can respond to the customers so I can reach out also on public or site. That's one way of communicating. Another way of communications is that we also send this reviews to our customer care and they call the customer to see if they are really not satisfied with the product. They will definitely call the customer and reach out and say; Hey, we really would like to know how we could help you or how we could make you happy again and sometimes this is by handing over a new product, sometimes it is just the acknowledgment of something that went wrong but usually it has to hands about products or services.

IR: Okay but do you respond to all the negative and positive reviews? And why?

IE: [4.7 Respond strategies] No, not all because there is simply not enough time in the world to respond to all of them but when we think a customer is really angry or really mad at us or really upset about something. I really think we need to do something. We also reach out to customers who are satisfied with our products. Sometimes when I do have the time I reward them with, hey I am so happy that you are satisfied with our products because I think it is a bad things to respond only to negative online reviews.

IR: And how do you process the online reviews? For instance, the customer has a complaint about something. How do you communicate it within the team? So how do you make sure that customers are satisfied again?

IE: Right now we send this reviews over to our customer services team and they will do all this work to make the customer happy again. They will notice in a certain system, they will notice it in sales force or they will say like, hey the customer is satisfied again. Also ask the customer if they are satisfied again and if you would like, we could remove your review because sometimes a customer is really ashamed of what he has written to us and they also sometimes ask for themselves to remove the review because they feel a bit embarrassed by complaining out loud.

IR: But do you also communicate it within a team for instance?

IE: No, I do not personally. [4.8 Analyze business success and improvements] When I think within the department like you have the fashion department, the furniture department inside of Wehkamp and they handle their own reviews. So for instance, when a buying assistant from the home departments sees a lot of negative reviews on the sofa, she will reach us out to the buyer and in their category meeting. It is not the company as a whole. I think it is a bit of a silo work.

IR: And why is that so that each department discusses their own reviews?

IE: Because we have departments that are really, are responsible for their own department so they have their own KPI for instance and they have their own responsibilities as well.

IR: Okay and why you do not communicate it within a meeting?

IE: Well, if I see a lot of, for instance, last year there were a lot of negative reviews on the sofa, then I will mention this to the buyer of this team immediately and say like; hey, I see this happening. I think we are a bit too big company to have this in cooperated into a larger meeting.

IR: And which challenges do you face of conducting an ORM strategy?

IE: I think it is the feedback. I think working with so many people. Sometimes I think there is a lack of feedback about how we could improve. I think people are a bit afraid to reach out to one and another

to see if something is going wrong and sometimes it is human work to moderate all those online reviews and sometimes something goes wrong. Sometimes it is a complaint about our services or about the delivery. For instance, the delivery that is not Wehkamp, that is PostNL or another company but those customers feel like it is part of Wehkamp and those reviews end up on site because of the moderator like missing one or two reviews and not feel train those out.

IR: And how do you deal with that?

IE: Than most of the time we go to the owner of the review tool and we say like, hey I think this should have been moderated as a complaint about shipping for instance instead of being like a product review and if it is a problem about shipping, we can collect these once in a while and we can hand this over to the team who is responsible for the contract with our shipping partners but as you know, there is a lot of problems going on with PostNL and TNT so, yes, we are working on it but it is very difficult.

IR: And what are the costs of conducting an ORM strategy? I know the implementation of a software tool and also of course the persons who are in charge of it but am I missing something?

IE: **[4.9 ORM costs]** Yes, the tool and the employees but I am thinking about this. I think you have like general working hours, like you said, staff or personnel and you have this review tool. Sometimes extra money is involved when you want like additional features to the tool you have for instance, you can do sampling with this tool and then you send over products for instance, like you send over 10 skin care products, send over to the people of this tool and they will charge you for giving you customers this product. So I think that could cost something more money but I think that mostly is it. For instance, we also do reviews indication. If you want to include reviews from another partner that's not aligned with your review tool, that cost you also more money because it is not included in the entire package.

IR: So it always depends on how many features you want within the software tool. This were actually interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE: I think, what I would like to add is that to never remove negative reviews. I think it is very important because I think when customers see this. Currently there is a lot of research and a lot of things to do about review authenticity. I think it is always important to have negative reviews to show others that you are very transparent and that you are open to show those negative reviews next to the positives ones. And I think this would give you a lot of credibility because you can buy reviews and those will be like all positive and I think that is not a very good thing to do. So, when you have all those positive reviews that doesn't give you any trustworthy in it.

## Interview transcript 5

**Company:** INK Hotel  
**Interviewee (IE1):** Nick Tombokan  
**Interviewee (IE2):** Natalia Basato  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 19-04-2019

### Introduction

*IR:* My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Science in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself?

*IE1:* Yes my name is Nick Tombokan. I am the Front Office manager here in the hotel. I work here now one and a half years and a responsible of course for the front office but also for the guest experience bars which contains the online reputation management.

*IE2:* My name is Natalia Basato. I have been INK for three months now almost three months. I am a trainee in guest experience management and a bit of quality management. So, I am the one answering all the reviews and taking care of our online reputation.

*IR:* Thank you. Now we will go to the first interview question and from the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted businesses. Would you agree for that?

*IE2:* Yes because when you are answering a review there is always the possibility that you are kind of selling yourself. So, in the review of someone on someone says something bad about your hotel or something that you know you can always turn it around. It is all about the wording that you put. Literally, if someone says "Oh your room is small". Then we can say that we are located in a historical building and because of that you know. So, there is always a way to turn something negative into something positive and make that into something attractive and promote your business in your reviews.

*IR:* Okay and how do you think about it?

*IE1:* The same and it also shows if you reply to all the reviews you get. It shows the future guests also that if the review is good or bad does not really matter at that time because they see that you are doing something with, you care. I think that's what people really want to see.

*IR:* And from the literature is also appears that is influences the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

*IE2:* I don't know how it directly influences sales. It does. A lot of people nowadays base themselves on TripAdvisor, Booking.com, all the reviews that we get and the more positive or the more responsive we are. I mean I also did research and I also so shows that there is a direct correlation between the amount of reviews you get and how positive they are and your revenue and how much money you make and everything. We do have meetings with our sales and revenue management into everything. We share all of this and we do on pricing and strategy and all of that.

*IR:* And can you measure it?

*IE1:* I am not sure if you are already looking into Booking.com, it actually can provide you data that if you score a zero point one higher than you did before it will gain you about one hundred eighty-thousand-euro revenue a year. Because they have all the data on that which shows that the higher your rank, the more likely people are going to book you.

*IR:* Okay, that is only on Booking.com or also on TripAdvisor?

*IE2:* Well the analysis that booking.com does for it for their reservations done through booking. So, because they have the whole system they can analyze it TripAdvisor is only refusal. No one can look through it. So no I don't see.

IR: And out of my research I concluded that an online review management strategy consists of the following five aspects. The first one is creating remarkable experience. It says about what a guest has to review and what are your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE2: It is kind of like it's their experience continuous after their stay. So, if you do an online review management and you are being responsive, and you are taking care of their guests even after they leave you are still expanding their experience. You know you are still talking to them about it you are showing how they like because they tell you how you impacted them. But when you answer them it shows how they impacted you as well you know as a guest. So, you can create that relationship with the guests and try to get them to become loyal and become back.

IR: And how do you create this relationship during their stay?

IE2: Well in every single interaction that we have.

IE1: For instance, we make it personal. So, I am not sure about your case study or what kind of hotel it is but in our hotel people know upfront that it's a team hotel. It used to be newspaper. People see that we write to our reviewers a story writer. So, it is from the first moment people walk, we put away all the barriers. That is why they have a low-key reception, laptops, we walk around we walk around the lobby we walk around everywhere. So, we are mixing with the guests and it also goes into the room. So, everything you see there is related to the newspaper from one hundred twenty years ago. So, that is the facilities but especially we score really high on service and service friendliness and guest orientation.

IE2: **[5.1 Personalization]** By making it personal it is like breaking the barriers. You see it in the restaurant for example at dinner and your waiter really talk to you. It is not just having a conversation, but it is about creating that whole experience. Like memorable moments right.

IR: And the second part is the encouragement part and it is about the quantity of reviews. Do you encourage the customers to write an online review? And how?

IE2: **[5.2 Ask for reviews]** You talk to your guests when they are here about how their stay was, if they have something to say and so you have the interaction here anyway. And we will ask our guests if someone is being super enthusiastic and being "Oh I loved it", this is like oh like you know for us it is really important that other people also know how satisfied you are. So, if you would like to share this on TripAdvisor. We will really appreciate because you know that's where the reputation of our hotel. So, we do ask some of the guests to pose on. We don't give a card. We don't give any physical reminder and we also do not wear nametags. So, for example you will see the biggest reviews, you do not see name mentions. You do have sometimes it's exceptional because none of us have name tags. So, it is more about all of the conversations about spending that little time guest asked me before.

IR: And you also ask for it via email or you just ask for them?

IE2: Yes. **[5.13 Surveys]** After they leave, they receive, it is the system we use is called TrustYou, which they receive an email for an online survey and that survey comes directly to us and it is only posted in the website of the hotel. It doesn't go to TripAdvisor.

IR: And do you think it's works? Can you measure it? And how?

IE1: Yes, everything.

IE2: The website has like all these statistics. Everything is index and be coordinated everything.

IR: And the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guests' opinions by using certain system in order to understand the feedback of the guest. The reviews on which review platforms influence the online reputation and sales the most?

IE1: Booking.com because we get a lot of, OTA, Online Travel Agents. They are one of the biggest, still. Of course, they are one of the biggest. So, their reputation and reviews influence a lot. And of course, you are i a really worldwide change. So, we get most bookings from either direct or from you know, Booking.com o from Expedia or from America.

IR: And why do you use a system to track the online reviews?

*IE1:* Because [5.3 System to track reviews] we need to keep track of you know how it was in the past. We need to make comparisons of how we are doing. And we need to benchmark ourselves with ourselves basically and in that system we can also benchmark with the competition and really all the hotels that also use TrustYou we can put our competition in there and see how they are doing with the reviews and everything.

*IR:* And whatever for you the necessary features of the software tool?

*IE1:* I think what is the most interesting is that you get all the reviews there. And they are very descriptive because there is a bunch of questions so it's not just like an overall rating like you get on TripAdvisor they ask everything, how is your interaction, check in and check out, staff, bar, restaurant. Everything is very descriptive so you know exactly what happened, what went right and what went wrong and you get to download reports of that for whatever period of time that you went overboard over information that you want to have and want to have an excel report for that. I think it is a really easy program to work with and to make conclusions and analyze it.

*IR:* And who are the main responsible of carrying out an ORM strategy?

*IE2:* [5.4 System to track reviews] Just us two.

*IR:* And how do you communicate it within the team?

*IE1:* So, we usually do not get a lot of negative reviews. So, we do not have to worry too much about that. No, I think we get around I think 60 70 reviews a week. And out of those, five six will be negative and that means like the open the overall satisfaction of the review will be negative. A lot of the reviews have like one or two negative points in them but overall it's still good. It's like an 80 90 100 but then they mentioned like "oh this was not working or this went wrong". So those are super easy to fix because you just address one point if the whole review is negative then what I do is I draft a review I send it to them they look it over they investigate whether more people want to contact the guest directly. If we want to you know because sometimes if it's a bad review we're not going to post our response online we just say we're going to contact to via e-mail

*IR:* And why do you do that?

*IE1:* It shows more it shows more power in the way of that you really take things seriously. Let alone if it's an issue if it is an realistic review or not but you show the reader like oh their review was their stay was really bad whatever the way it was to help hotel contact them personally. So they really take on even after you left they still take care and you can if you just respond to the review you are just defending yourself and defending is not the answer in getting new people to this issue because they want to see that you care.

*IE2:* And there is always two parts to the reviews because reviews is one way of it is to increase sales and to make more revenue. But the other one that is the main way that we have to improve. So, we need to use that information actually in a constructive way. So, for example we got a review recently that was not to even a lot of things many times, but he did not give any explanation. So, there was no point he must be like I am sorry will I be all responsible. Right. We just e-mailed him directly and I made. I am so sorry that this happened, but we don't know exactly why your experience was so bad. Can you please explain to us because every time we get a review and he mentions a specific moment we go we talk to that person and the staff we ask the staff what happened. We talked to the guests like we tried to see exactly what the situation was. This is not just about increasing revenue and being great on TripAdvisor. It really is about taking that information and putting into work here so that we can actually improve. And those are the ones we remember.

*IR:* And how do you show your guest that you improved the complaint?

*IE1:* [5.5 Respond strategies] By most a lot of the times we answer the guest and they will never answer back.

*IE2:* It is one way traffic. And if we ask a guest for feedback to elaborate and they do not reply, then we reply online saying we are trying to get in contact you e-mailed you personally we await your response. So, the other guest can also see or they tried but they never got a response.

*IR:* Have you ever experienced fake reviews? And how do you deal with it? How do you recognize them in the first case?



IE1: Well, we have handovers. We have profile notes in the system. So if something happens those are updated as well. So we get a review saying that the staff was really rude and we see in the profile note for example that happens sometimes when people smoke in the room. They have to pay the cleaning costs. Yeah, then we are rude, we are not rude. You do not like the fact that you have to pay 150 euros cleaning costs. Then they change something around. And then we will try to work a way around it but if it's worth mentioning that a treasure room for example in that the bay then tried to see how we could figure out. But it's not necessary again not to defend those because we know better.

IE2: And I think we need to be very on point with our staff as well. Look everyone needs to be very aware and have a system of if something bad happens how to report it. So that we can gather information and everyone needs to know the importance of mentioning that to people like coming to me to next day like hey this happened and you might get a review just so that we also know the two sides of the story and we trust our staff enough to know that if someone says the staff did this to me and we ask them they are not going to lie to us you know they will be like "oh yeah, when a situation like this". We trust them enough that we can have that conversation with our staff and believe in what they say.

IR: What is the reason then that you do not discuss the weakness within the meeting and you just go immediately to the person or to the department?

IE1: **5.6 Analyze business success and improvements** We do discuss it in the meeting. So, for example we get a bad review, I am not going to automatically go to the management team meeting and be like, this person did this this and this without consulting the person first. So, we asked the guest what happened and then I also go to the reception say this guests said that this and this, do you remember it? Because sometimes it is hard to remember. And they maybe say: Yes, I remember it was was here. I checked your profile and noticed there. Then I go to the meeting and then presented to them like okay, this is the review. This is where they stay, what happened. This is the people that were involved. This is how we are following up. It was it was like this. It wasn't like this. How are we going to improve?

IR: But do you also discuss the positive reviews?

IE1: Yes, we have a weekly meeting with the management and to discuss the reviews from the week before the positive ones mentioning also the negative ones. And then in time, together with the management we try to find trends in positive or negative way and your response to it that you could make an action plan.

IR: But I assume it is a lot to discuss all the reviews on weekly basis, so you just pick some?

IE1: I try to pick the ones I see staff at this specific moment had this or you know there was a more specific policy or defense. People there are more specific either positive or negative effect.

IR: And how do you measure that you improve the negative complaints?

IE2: We have those statistics, I guess.

IE1: You have all these statistics on weekly basis from Trustyou especially on the survey because you get so many secret answers. We were monitoring weekly, monthly and we have a year to date target.

IE2: And we have like a RPS target which is the overall performance target that we have and you see that fluctuating throughout the weeks like every I get the week one I get the month one that year one. And then you can also compare this week to last week.

IE1: And some periods of time compared to last year. Those kinds of things.

IR: And about the responding part, do you respond to all your reviews? And why?

IE2: That is the policy that we have here.

IE1: Brand standard, first of all.

IE2: I think, you know I agree **5.7 Respond strategies** that just because one person was more descriptive does not mean that that review is worth more to us or you know like the guests took the time to sit down and write a review. If it is for long or if it is just ticking boxes like I think we should just answer "thank you so much appreciate it. We look forward to seeing you again. Bye."



*IE1:* And again, all the reviews are valuable rather than negative or positive and that is why I respond to everything.

*IR:* It is with a personal approach or an automatic message?

*IE1:* Personal.

*IE2:* We have templates, but we rarely use just temper. Only if it a very broad use like five star no comment at all. Then we have a little temper like thank you we appreciate it. We'll see you again. But if they write anything else. Then I would write them a personal approach.

*IR:* And which challenges do you face of conducting an online review management strategy?

*IE2:* I think one of the hardest parts is that sometimes you get an average review and you think that person is OK and then you answer and they reply to you being like: " this is not what I meant." So it's like trying to understand. It's like when you're texting somebody there's only so much that you can pick up from the words, you're not talking to them in person. So, you don't know how they're feeling. So it's like trying to read and really understand how that person felt about it and reflect on it in your answer. I think that's for me that's the hardest.

*IE1:* One of the challenges is sometimes you get a real unfair review and there is nothing you can do about it because you cannot delete it. Sometimes we just take our loss in that one. We stimulate also into responses to our future guest or when they ever come back. That they say something during their stay because we always say in responses we like to serve you during your stay. So, when there's something wrong with the room, tell us. If there is something wrong, tell us and not afterwards. But the biggest challenge is that some people hide behind their screens and it happens still a lot I think still 75 percent of the things that is mentioned online are not mentioned during their stay. And even when you ask them at check out how was your stay. It was good. And then you get a two.

*IR:* And how do you respond to that?

*IE2:* We say like, well I am sorry. Thank you for answering. I am sorry that you know we did not meet your perspectives but of course in different ways. Next time you do not hesitate to let us know during your stay because our staff would help gladly help you assist you in choosing a better room, choosing it because you complain about the room.

*IR:* You provide them a refund?

*IE2:* A refund is your last option. Compensating is not good not for the guests, not for us because you are compensating on a problem that already happened even if you would give them money backstage still had a bad stay. So, we prefer if it were really bad to compensate them in the future.

*IE2:* It is like welcoming them back.

*IE1:* Exactly. We would like to say, oh I had a stay for three nights, I don't know. Your room was minus 10 the whole time. Please we would like to invite you for one or two complimentary nights to come back and show you how we really work.

*IE2:* Because they get money back but they still don't like you they still want to come back.

*IE1:* And they probably still post a negative review without saying that they got compensated. That's one of the challenges.

*IE2:* The other part that sucks is when you get a bad review and the person closed in like three or four different channels the same review and they post it on TrustYou, TripAdvisor, Booking.com.

*IR:* And how do you deal with that?

*IE2:* Well, if they post exact the same review in all of them, I post the exact same answer.

*IE1:* People are not aware how much influence it is if you gave a 1 on three different sites.

*IE2:* Because TrustYou get not only the grade from the internal but from all of these. So we get a performance score from all of these sites into TrustYou like it analyze everything so you can get a two in all of them, your script was going down.

IR: And what are the costs of conducting an ORM strategy? I know it is the software tool which you are using and of course the employees who are in charge for it. Am I missing something?

IE1: **[5.8 ORM costs]** I would not know how much the program costs because it's in the chain. So, I do not know. It takes a lot of time. So you have to imagine that Natalia was working full time on it. I'm working one or two days a week or front office managers also assisting Natalia when I am not around. So you already have three persons and then you'll have the whole management who also look into it. So from that you already have basically about 10 people working on the reviews. Alone, and then the customer program itself.

IE2: We do every week get scores that we get for example on TrustYou because it's so detailed then I get all the things regarding check in check out. And I do a report for front office be checking score checkouts score date. Who did the check in, who did the check out. And then do things like personal ratings per person per week and then per month. So we see for example. If this person did 7, they got scored on seven check ins and three of them were negative. Then we get a score for that person for that. We don't share with them which is for management. But just so that they see all this person is lacking all for this person is doing really good. And then you can also do training you know. I do that for F&B now, Housekeeping.

IR: And then you focus mainly on the online reviews during the training?

IE1: No we just started with this way of evaluating because we want to get more into depth feedback. For example just for our team for the reception. Because if you have 10 reviews and five say they give you a four. You can talk all you want but there's something going on. That you can take a one on one with a staff member. And of course also look at the explanations people give because sometimes I even got a four or a one because they couldn't check in at 9 a.m.. And then Natalia writes down the common next to the score. So we can also put it into perspective.

IE2: Because the housekeeping scores we get is for recommendation. Sometimes you get a couple of days sometimes enough for cleaning this up accommodations the size, the light, the brightness, the bathroom. So. I write the score but I also put what did I say, why they give us the three codes because we're almost too small.

IR: This were actually my interview questions. Is this something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE1: The company that you are doing your studies for do they have their own survey etc as well?

IR: No.

IE2: I got one recommendation because I know you do recommendations right. So. It's like you need to responsive and you need to have a flow of information. So it's not just about the sales, it is about we look pretty online. **[5.9 Analyze business success and improvements]** It is about taking the information you get in those reviews. And turning it into an action plan for your hotel. Because you to keep on getting something that says that. The water leaks in the bathroom and you just keep on responding I'm sorry we're going to fix you're going to fix it you don't tell maintenance it's not going to be fixed you're still going to get those reviews. So it's about having a sequence of makes a plan of how the information is going to go from the online reviews to your maintenance person. So. I recommend to them that if they're getting bad reviews. It's like the hotel is not doing good in the daily operation. So it's not about just transforming their online reputation or being pretty. It's about transforming the actual with.

IE1: **[5.10 remarkable experience]** Yes and managing expectations. That is my favorite word for the last year now because it is all about managing expectations. I am not sure how they are shown online but what we show online is actually what we have. We actually show that our queen size rooms are 16 square meters. Some of them are bigger but the smallest one is 16 square meters. So people know if I book this room it's a small room. We show the pictures, there's nothing to hide. I know sometimes in the hotel that it shows that they tried to put a nice picture that looks bigger than it is. That's how you destroy your own online reputation. You just have to be real here really be real.

IE2: And you really have to have people that care because for example we found out recently that there was one website that had photos from the old hotel, the new hotel, had photos of the suite in the classic room. It was all my stuff. And then you start like marketing sales up. Everyone was like walking and talking to the people and trying to fix it because you we can't have that. No not all of our rooms have a bathtub and then you can't put them in like within that because people going to be like where's my bathroom. So it is really about managing that and **[5.11 Analyze business success and improvements]** also Amsterdam like the price fluctuates a lot and you can really see like once we're

charging 400/500 euros for a room. How are reviews going to go down a bit because people expect so much more instead of when they pay one hundred and fifty years in a year. I shared the reviews with the revenue manager because he's going setting the prices so then I'm like look our reviews are kind of going down a little bit.

IR: What is the most important part of online reviews?

IE1: The quantity only works if it has good reviews. If you get a week with 10 reviews and you get an overall you get a nine and a half but the week after you get to the eight and you'll have 40 reviews the week before doesn't really matter anymore. And you just need to focus on the people who love you. You can tell during the check out the reception if they want to do you a favor and share it online. Does one of the best senses you can usefully think because you need those lovers those fans you need those to post to review.

IE2: **[5.3 Ask for reviews]** And you need to be careful as well because TripAdvisor and Booking.com have very strict rules on how you can ask for reviews. So for example you can't have a tablet at the reception on TripAdvisor. So there are also very strict rules of like how you can get someone to post a review but you can give him a card but you cannot ask him to sit with you and write everything.

IE1: It could feel that the guest feels pressure to give you a good review of caution standing next to him or her. But giving cards during the check-out really works well. That is a small thing and don't overdo it. Do not ask it more times because you can get a negative review because they feel stalked. The best option is to do it at the check-out because then you know for sure they had a great stay.

IE2: And for instance on TripAdvisor, it is about reading but it is also about the amount of reviews you get. You will matter if you get five hundred reviews of an eight or if you get 200 out of an eight. So it's always better to have less of a higher. Our target is above an eight so you need to ask those guests who are really satisfied, like "oh my god".

IE1: **[5.12 Respond strategies]** And TripAdvisor's ranking gets higher if you respond to all the reviews. But if you look at the detail we are just floating around. Booking.com is based on average the average, Google as well because they do not have any ranking and TripAdvisor is everything. So, the amount of reviews, the value of the reviews and responsiveness so basically your activity on TripAdvisor.

IE2: Because Booking.co is detailed as well because they rate you on six things and then you get your overall scores for their reviews is an average of those six things and TripAdvisor is just five or one to five.

## Interview transcript 6

**Company:** Hotel Pulitzer  
**Interviewee (IE):** Rochelle Plet  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 24-04-2019

### Introduction

*IR:* My name is Yvette Wieberdink and I am a Hotel Management student at Saxion University of Applied Science in Apeldoorn. Currently I am in my last year of this education and to finalize my study I have to conduct a Bachelor thesis report. The thesis consists of a research about online review management for Apollo Motorhome Holidays in Australia. The company has a large amount of negative online reviews and is concerned about its poor online reputation. This interview is conducted to gain more knowledge about online review management strategies to provide an advice to the client. The interview will take 30-45 minutes and will be recorded. Would you like to introduce yourself?

*IE:* Yes, welcome Yvette. Thank you so much for being here. My name is Rochelle Plet, I work for the Guest Experience team and I am actually in charge of all the administrative part of the Guest Experience team. The guest Experience team is here for making the guest stay as beautiful as possible and as memorable as possible, so we take care of our guest from the beginning and they make a reservation until the very ending, depart the hotel. So, in principle, I focus on the reviews online on different platforms. I work on our VIP list so focusing on which guests are coming and especially for our suits, so we always try to give them more attention by asking if we can anything do for them before arrival, pre-arrival mails and during their stay of course we take care. We have a guest relations team that brings for example for special occasions for example a honeymoon or birthdays, the balloons, the cake, the champagne, Everything to 'wauw' them. We really strive to create the wow effect for our guests, during their stay. And of course, there is also the challenging part of within the Guest Experience team because of service recovery for guests who did not have a wonderful stay and therefore we also need to pay attention to this and focus on them to see what we can do to keep their feeling as great as possible.

*IR:* Thank you Rochelle. Now we will go to the first interview question. From the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that?

*IE:* Absolutely. Online reviews are very important and crucial because nowadays the guest look online. Everything is online and before they even look they read the online reviews which are set online so they look at the negatives as well as the positives reviews and this make them decide wheatear or not to choose to come to us. It was a coincidence, I just bumped into a guest and asked if it was their first time here and they said they were actually recommended by friends who left their online review that loved Pulitzer so there you can already see that due to online reviews, they actually choose us and it is all part of the Guest Experience team to make the rememberable stay.

*IR:* And according to your story, do you also think that online reviews influence the sales of the company?

*IE:* That is a very good question. I was discussing this with our Marketing team, and we do not really have seen in numbers if online reviews wheatear or not have influence on the sales. We believe it will have influence because we know that all our guest, Pulitzer Amsterdam has 68% guests coming from America so therefore we know that they really look on TripAdvisor, and that is why we focus on TripAdvisor to respond the guest and Americans really use TripAdvisor and that's why we focus on TripAdvisor but wheatear or not the sales is really difficult to say it. It's hard to measure. We do it internally in regard to negative reviews, so my job is part of distributing all feedback of each department to the real department. So, if it is about food, it is related to the chef. If it is about Housekeeping service turn down services, then I send it to Housekeeping so that the Housekeeping, the specified department knows what the feedback is so we can improve on this and how we see if there is a different by hopefully positive reviews.

*IR:* And out my research I concluded than an ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first one is create remarkable experience and the first part is says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature appears create remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience? Before you already told me you would like to create that wauw effect but how do you realize that?

*IE:* How do we realize that. [6.1 Personalization] So, the first step is gathering so much information as we can and in our emails that we send to our guest before they arrive. So for example, for family we have, these are also very important for us because they have little kids and then we always ask the

name of the children, the ages because of course not a five year old kid likes the same as a 10 years old so we always want to see the difference so we can personalize the gifts for the kids and creating, maybe, for example, we have a pillow case which, that if we know that little Tommy likes football, we personalize his name on it with football pictures and then it creates already a wow because he doesn't expect it firstly and secondly, he has a relation with it because we know that he liked football. So, we make it happen by actually asking information and actually creating it and then, after their stay, we asked if they enjoyed their stay with us and any feedback, they gave us, we actually process and work on.

IR: So actually, you create a personal approach towards the guests?

IE: That's true.

IR: And the second part is the encouragement part and it is about the quantity of reviews and it involves asking the customers to publish an online review. Do you encourage online reviews? And if so, how?

IE: Yes, so [6.2 Ask for reviews] we of course want the guest to leave reviews out of themselves and not pushed to get do that but we do promote it so we have little cards in Jansz, a TripAdvisor card with please like us on Facebook or leave a comment on the platforms they can leave it on. So, for example TripAdvisor, Google and Facebook. Those are the three main ones we work with and so we give that them by cards at the end of the dinner or of course our sales department is actively on that and by the front desk, if the guest service agent has had good conversation with the guest and had a good experience, they always ask friendly, not pushing, but friendly ask if you like it so much, please share it with the world and leave it online. So, we said it the cards at Jansz, we say it at the Front desk and sometimes, if it is very positive, I send an email, at the end of the stay because they have an online review on revenue which sometimes they scored tens and there will be back and then I said Oh thank you so much for your beautiful comments. It would also be appreciated if you would like to share it with the world. And then we send the link.

IE: And why don't you send that e-mail to all of your guests?

IR: To all of our guests it could be a little bit time consuming, I think. We don't send it to all the guests. Especially, if some filled in our surveys online and he really had a good experience.

IE: And you think it works like encouraging the guests to publish an online review?

IR: Absolutely.

IE: And can you measure it?

IR: So there hasn't been a real measurement strategy that we've been using. But personally, I've been sending a couple of e-mails with the request. And for example, maybe out of five I see that three did post something. So, I do see that the notice that some guest is also dependent on our guests because some really do not prefer to publish on a third party. They just want to share it with us and they know they'll be back. And that is that's sufficient.

IE: And the third part is the monitor part and involves being aware of guests of opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers and the reviews on which platforms influence your sales and online reputation the most?

IR: [6.11 Survey] So, we are working with Revonate. I don't know if you're aware of it is it a software tool which creates our online surveys. But that's only for internal use, we can only see it internally so external people cannot see the surveys that the guests fill in on Revonate. Also, since the pre-arrival emails from marketing or when they have made a reservation. So, it has all our customers our guests in it profiles. Yes. And from that creates a comparison competitive comparison to all other five-star properties in Amsterdam.

IE: Okay. And which platforms do you mainly focus on?

IR: [6.3 Review platforms] That is TripAdvisor Facebook and Google Plus and Expedia.

IE: Okay. And what are for you the necessary features of the system, is it like the star rating or the quality of the quantity or reviews?

IR: As I mentioned before we have a 65 percent of our guests are from America and been through research and marketing team discovered that TripAdvisor is the most is the most popular platform that guests are American guests are looking at because our majority so high we really focus on TripAdvisor. Google is now increasing and growing. So, we are definitely focusing we have Google plus business. So, we also really focus on that but we don't focus on booking.com. Your question was very good. Also what we focus on is that it can't separate our three outlets because we have three outlets of Jansz, we have Pulitzers' bar. We have Pause and of course the hotel. And TripAdvisor and Google can separate them booking.com doesn't. So that's just one general platform for everything. Well as I also want to find our feedback through the specific where the feedback really is necessary or do not know how to explain this. So, we have a better overview of where our feedback needs improvement.

IR: And have you ever experienced fake reviews?

IE: Fake reviews, no not really. [6.4 Fake reviews] There was a one time a guest who left a one star review for Jansz restaurant and we thought it was very peculiar because we remember that day. We spoke to the restaurant manager. He said everything was fine that anything he didn't recalls what the guest was explaining. He didn't recall it from the evening that the guest was talking about but that the guest also left another review for this on the same day for another restaurant for one star. So we thought it was peculiar and what the steps we did to follow the steps taken as we just reported it to TripAdvisor that this guest was leaving the one star reviews on the same night for two different restaurants including ours. So, we just reported.

IR: OK. And how do you recognize them? Is it mainly by giving one star?

IE: Well, not particularly for one star. But of course, we would like to know what other experiences the guest has had to see where we can improve on. So, then you just look into the profile of the guest. Do a little bit of research.

IR: And who are the main responsible for carrying out an ORM strategy? Is it one person or one department or one team?

IE: [6.5 System to track reviews] The whole team. So, in principle it's marketing and the guest experience team. So, it is a collaboration between the guests experience team and the marketing team. The marketing team focuses on tools and how to manage the brand layout to promote it on different platforms. Whereas the guest experience teams focus on the reply and making sure that the feedback given are positive or negative and is shared within the hotel and the involved department.

IR: And that was the communication between those teams?

IE: Well we try our best. [6.6 Analyze business success and improvements] We have a lovely team here at this or so we work quite easily if there's any questions we could just opening call them e-mail them, Skype them and to just be on one line, we have also meetings of course. And so it is through e-mails and just making sure everyone's aware of all the activities.

IR: And how do you realize that everyone is aware of all these activities?

IE: So, the meetings that we have I think is one time a month that the older departments sit together to discuss what is happening in the hotel and what is the new promotions. And of course, to make it happen because for example we have the Rembrandt package now which marketing has to promote online but how can search teams and our guests experience and have to be aware of this because we have to arrange flowers. We have to arrange of vouchers and everything. So, it is a team collaboration which is needed in order to achieve very strong communication.

IR: How do you discuss the online reviews with the other departments? How is the process?

IE: We firstly shared it within the duty reports so the duty report is for all of the management team and also all their departments. We send that every day because we check reviews every day especially TripAdvisor and Google and we reply to all of them. We share that view via the email. In the duty report is for the management and that is discussed every morning. So, if there is a feedback or positive remarks it's discussed every morning by the management team in the meeting.

IR: So, it is not that you have a special meeting for all the online reviews?

IE: No, that unfortunately no. Because if there is feedback, I will send it to the to the involved departments and then they involved departments discusses within the team and there is where the

improvement starts. We cannot see it in sales because we cannot specifically see oh because of that review then is influences but due to the improvement we hope to get more positive reviews.

IR: And before you mentioned that you are checking the online reviews daily. Why is that so?

IE: Because it's very important and then we do get a lot of reviews in especially now that it is high season. We see that immediately in the reviews. Two months ago in January February was low season. Then there were not as many views out there this week for example because of Easter.

IR: And how important is it to have a certain amount of online reviews on the review platforms?

IE: I think it's important that we do receive and especially five-star reviews. Now it is important to get reviews not necessarily daily but definitely to just get feedback in order to show the guests that we are or listening to them to show that we care about our hotel and for them of course. Yeah especially if it is a negative review we have to fix that immediately.

IR: And how do you fix that?

IE: It is totally dependent on what the feedback is of course. But we do fix it immediately by sharing it by the involved departments and then taking immediately action if possible.

IR: And how do you respond to your online reviews? Do you respond to all of them which or only to the negative ones or only positive ones?

IE: So, [6.7 Respond strategies] we reply to all of them, negative and positive. Only on Facebook and Google you will see because on TripAdvisor it's compulsory to leave a comment. Its content is not only ratings but on Google and Facebook does only ratings. So, people who do not leave. We appreciate it, do not leave a comment including a rating, we do not reply. But if they do leave a comment and a rating, we reply.

IR: And why is that so?

IE: That is a good question. I personally, I did not think of that actually. Maybe some idea for the future. For example, an one-star review on the other hand without a comment. We do ask to get in contact with us. Because then we would like to elaborate on why. I guess the five stars for us it is like they had a positive experience so therefore we won't necessarily need to but we of course can thank them. So I definitely adore it.

IR: And how do you respond to your online reviews? Is it with a personal approach or an automatic message?

IE: It is not an automatic message. It is all personalized, every day. We always thank the guests for sharing their experience. We personalized due to the fact to read the reviews and then respond to what they have spoken about. And then we always try to hope but ask them to come back.

IR: And why is it with a personal approach?

IE: Because everyone likes to be cared for and know that they are important to us. So that is a reason, personalization. It is like if you want to create a relationship with your guests.

IR: And which challenges do you face of conducting an ORM strategy?

IE: So, the challenge is we have. To make sure the guests will come back to us first with feedback and then sharing it online. And that is why we have the Revonate online survey to ensure that we can fix their feeling before they share it with the world or have a negative feeling to not come back anymore. So that is one of the challenges. And of course, the guest service recovery part to make sure their feeling is turning into a positive one, if it is a negative.

IR: And how can you deal with that?

IE: [6.8 Analyze business success and improvements] Some guests really want to be heard. So even just a small phone call can do the trick. So by actually taking the personal step and contacting the guests and reaching out to them and saying we are here for you and actually talking to them to see what it is and they might have not shared it online but if we contact them we can find out why and then change that.



IR: And that is the task of which department?

IE: Guest experience a guest experience.

IR: And what are the costs of conducting an ORM strategy? I know that the implementation of an ORM strategy is the cost of an online community manager or the employees who are in charge for it or the software tool of course. Am I missing something?

IE: No, that was the same conclusion we came to. Yes, [6.9 ORM costs] it is indeed the employees cost you are thinking of and the platforms the costs are included. These are the two main costs.

IR: And is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE: Well I think it's very important. Even if there are a lot of negative reviews you should get started because this is what guests are looking for and if you want to increase your revenue or reputation or your reviews online then the best way to start is by replying to them.

IR: And also, maybe to ask for the reviews?

IE: Absolutely. [6.10 Ask for reviews] If you see that the guests are not coming out of themselves or there is not a lot of reviews, then definitely ask. You always have a no, but you can get a yes.

#### Interview transcript 7 – client

**Company:** Apollo Motorhome Holidays  
**Interviewee (IE):** Saton Howard  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 10-05-2019

IE: I am working for Apollo and at the moment currently I'm looking at our customer journey and seeing when we can make improvements on that. And I'm also looking at our reviews that we've been getting online only and implementing a system for that so that we can manage it better or we can respond better and hopefully we can improve. Be part of the conversation a bit more and improve our communications around it so you know when we have people come in considering getting a motorhome then the reviews aren't putting them off. That's what I'm working on.

IE: Now we will go through the first interview question. From the literature it appears that managing online reviews promoted business. Would you agree for that? And why?

IR: Well when you you're doing a search for a business and you have a look and you see that other people have had a good experience and you're like ok you trust that you trust the community. And you also trust that the service that's providing those reviews is doing it in the most unbiased way possible. For example, with Google you can have a look to see what the reviews are most relevant what the most recent are. You can sort of buy the oldest etc. So, you know there's a bit more power that you've got there in the filtering of those reviews and you can also have a look at five stars only four star or one star to see if there's any common themes that are coming through. So that's the reason that would be the reason why. I personally don't believe reviews you do whether it's not whether it's good or bad. I don't but I do it. I'm just not really that sort of a person even if I've been given the prompt and I like it I generally won't give a review except if I Uber but I sometimes give the driver five stars.

IE: And the literature also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

IR: Yes, I do. I believe. Well, for all of the reasons that I've said and the guy rang me the other day whose works for a review company funnily enough and he's a sales rep and he rang up and he said "Hey I know I work in the reviews business but I had a look at your reviews for motorhome in New Zealand and they were garbage". So, he was with another group he was with three others. It was four families travelling around New Zealand. And so, he went I saw the reviews and he said no it was no good. So as a result of that he had to keep searching to see if there was anything else with more positive reviews. And in the end, he found a company that had really good reviews and he booked with them because of the review. He was up and because the reason why he went to so much effort to do that is because he was going on holiday where he was spending money with his family. It was five thousand dollars or something, New Zealand.



Times four people. So that's twenty thousand dollars' worth of rental right there. And if he's spending that money, he doesn't want to have a bad experience basically. So, if there is the option to choose something different then you probably want to choose the one where you know that. You're going to have the least amount of problems.

*IE:* And what is the influence of online reviews on your sales. Do you measure this or not?

*IR:* That's what we're in the process of sort of working out now. I've anecdotally thought that it does have a detriment to our sales. The only thing that's going for us is that our other main competitors and the other large competitor has equally as bad reviews. Yes. So, it's kind of like well unless you're going for really searching for someone else independent, you're choosing the best of a bad bunch. You're choosing the best one out of two that are bad.

*IE:* And out of my research I concluded that an online review management strategy consists of the following five aspects. And I would like to discuss each aspect with you. And the first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. But what in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

*IR:* Once where they don't even know that there doesn't know where he goes. So, they don't they the best experiences if it just so happens naturally. But I don't have any issues. Even if there is issues it's sorted out straight away. That's what are good experiences is because what you want is for the customer to go you know what. I didn't have any issues with this service. I'll probably use it again and I most definitely will recommend it to people that I know.

*IR:* And how is creating Apollo this remarkable experience towards their customers?

*IE:* **[7.1 Standardization]** Well I think that the day you the answer to that is yes, in theory. So, the theory of it is that we do follow the process you know one to 10 or whatever it might be. But in the practical sense that's not how it turns out. And if there was ever a time where we ticked all the boxes one to ten it would be a beautiful thing. But because it's so many things factors that can contribute to the bad experience. You know the frequency of that is more one they wait too long to get there.

They had a really long wait time for example then they have long wait times so then the person who's showing that the motorhome rushed through the demonstration of the vehicle and they didn't get shown how to use the oven for example or the stove. They go to use the stove and the stove is not working properly. You know that could have been resolved back when they were tested it and it's not working. So those type of things although in theory we say hey you come in to check out you then go and do a vehicle inspection. You can get shown as you, then you go on the road and do your holiday all the little tiny bits it happened in between there's a lot could go wrong. So, the process of booking through to drop off there's so many steps to the most steps. There are just means that there's more points where there can be failure.

*IR:* And the second is the encourage part and is about the quantity reviews and it involves asking the customers to publish an online review. Do you encourage your customers to publish an online review? And how?

*IE:* **[7.2 Ask for reviews]** Yes, we do. What happens is when they drop off the van, we trigger a message to them which asks them to write their experience and that writing is your standard piece. And from there we are about to implement a new system that if they write us highly because after they give us a write an MP's writing we send them a survey. This is going to be the new process first. It gets a bit more data. We get a survey and they say how is the booking process has these houses. We ask them what if there's 15 questions or something like that. But in order to get our increase in four- and five-star reviews publicly so that basically on Google. If you come through with a high-end MP's so there are nine or 10, we put reviewers from Google right at the top of the survey and we also add a bottom if you between MP's between 1 and 7.

Then we don't add that onto Google onto the survey. We don't add that Google link.

So, what we're trying to do is go well we do want to hear about you and please fill in the survey so we can get some more data. But if you are a promoter, we want you to promote that publicly. If you're a detractor don't promote that publicly please just tell us. You might do it; you might do it anyway. We're not encouraging them to go on and do it on Google. Now that's not the super best practice would be for us to do it in a more of an authentic way. So, you know every time that we shouldn't be mattering

whether or not it's bad or good but because we've had so many that are poor, we want to bring the standard up a bit quicker. And are we skewing that where we can't.

IR: And the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guest's opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. The reviews on which review platforms influence your sales and online reputation the most?

IE: **[7.3 Review Platforms]** Google, for sure.

IR: And why?

IE: Well, it's because a lot of people it's super easy to post on there. It's one. It's a 100 percent public so you don't need to be you know part of a group to say that. It shows up on search really well and it shows up in the Maps app as well. It's very one of the more probably the most influential yes.

IR: And what are for you're the necessary features of an effective review platform?

IE: We want to have because we've got a lot of locations, we want to have all of those locations come into one place so aggregate all of that into one place. We want to be able to redirect any of that feedback inquiry to the right department to get a response. So that needs to happen. We need to be able to make sure that that system does give people a prompt to go on Labor review. And we need to be able to be notified when we get feedback reviews coming.

IR: But do you use a system to monitor the online reviews?

IE: Yes. We just implemented a system called Podium.

IR: And have you ever experienced fake reviews?

IE: I don't think they have been. I think that some people have over dramatized or over sensationalized the feedback because of how they feel about it. I think that's what happens a lot. I don't think anyone's review it just for the sake of providing about you something. And I put a review on, and they might just do make it a little bit worse than what it was.

IR: And who are the main responsible of carrying out an online review management strategy? Is it one team or one person?

IE: **[7.4 System to track online reviews]** Well it needs to be owned by one person, so it needs to have a champion, but it needs to involve all stakeholders really because it's everyone's business. You can't run a business and go well someone is owning the reputation of the company. It's everyone's job to represent the reputation of the business.

IR: And how are you currently responding to your online reviews?

IE: **[7.5 Respond strategies]** We tried to respond to most to the reviews that I guess I'm the most severe. The ones that might be most damaging in a lot of cases we're aware of who the people are and so we know that branch has had some issues and they've gone on to write this review, so we already know about it. But that's where we would prioritize it. We wouldn't just. It's a bit of a tough one because we sort of look at the most severe for the ones that involve like financial decisions or financial impact the most because if we've overcharged someone then we want to be able to give that money back to them as soon as possible because it's you know it's not ours. But if someone's complaining about the bed was uncomfortable then well you know you can't have a bed that everyone finds comfortable.

IR: But do you respond on those reviews?

IE: We do. But there's nothing we can do about it. It's kind of about just acknowledging that and saying, "hey you know sorry that you had that experience". We haven't heard this about this van before."

IR: But do you always respond with a personal approach or is it sometimes also with an automatic message?

IE: After hours it will be an automatic message. So, it's normally responded to from our guest services area and they only open Monday to Friday that a week in certain times. So outside of that there's an automated response.

IR: And how do you process the online reviews? Will they be communicated within a team?

IE: [7.6 Analyze business success and improvement] Mostly they get dealt with through guest services but in amongst some of those reviews though might need to question other areas of the business.

IR: So, it's not that you arrange a meeting for or something like that?

IE: No.

IR: And is there a reason for?

IE: It's done on an as needed basis. This is usually we know what's happened.

Most of the time there's not much you can do about it because it's already happened. It's more about making sure that that customer sort of feels like that you've acknowledged that they might not have had the best experience but hey there's nothing we can do about it that we can't give everyone their money back. Or else everyone will complain even if they had a good time.

IR: And which challenges do you face of conducting an online review management strategy?

IE: Ownership of it is a bit challenging. So, who is going to own it the most? It's really easy for someone to look at a review and go. Well that's not my area, I don't know everything about it. You know when really you could find out. So, I think the education piece and who's going to be championing that review management is really key. But at the same time knowing how to respond to different things should be in a really consistent way. So, we have a consistent voice on everything because we can't have you know if especially when it comes to payments and refunds you can't necessarily have leniency in one way or another because of how irate someone is its kind of needs to come back to what our policy is. And we also try and bring the conversation offline as much as we can.

IR: And why?

IE: Just for privacy for the person. And you know we don't want to be sort of bringing things up publicly about their experience but again the problem with that is that we need to publicly acknowledge that hey we're going to take it offline as well so people can go ok, I trying to be resolved.

IR: What is the main reason of the amount of negative online reviews of Apollo? Is it because of the service?

IE: I think the main ones are around the feeling of the customers that they might there's some hidden charges. So, we're not it doesn't feel like we're clear enough about what they're going to be charged especially around insurance. It might be a bit confusing and a bit complicated and it is. And the other thing is if you do an online booking sometimes you don't always understand what the final price is. It's just not quite clear enough its 90 percent clear it's not 100 percent clear.

IR: How can you improve that?

IE: We are trying to work out ways that we can improve that. So it's really this is exact trying to simplify it because there's a lot of charges you get charged per day and then the more we have it the less the cost is and then there's insurance inside and then there's extras and there's all these different things that are become part of the cost and it becomes very confusing.

IR: And what are the costs of conducting an online review management strategy? I know that the implementation of an online review management strategy implies the costs of, for instance, an online community manager or the employee who is in charge of it and the software. But am I missing something?

IE: No that's the main thing. But [7.7 ORM costs] if you are having a look at the cost of reputation then you know that can be a really big cost for a lot of if there's a lot of negativity around the reputation. Well what sort of price can you put on that. You know people aren't purchasing goods or using your services but at the same time in order to try to rectify that you have to spend more money to try and rectify that and bring that brand reputation back up. So, you know if it's really bad then it can become quite a costly exercise beyond your normal operating costs. But I think what you've covered is right there's the resource to manage it and then there's the cost of the operational cost of the software that you use is that the time. But the biggest cost is your brand reputation.

*IR:* And this actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

*IE:* No not really. I think I would have more questions after we have this system in place for a while. Because I've just had a feeling that we might get a slight improvement not a dramatic improvement out of doing this. And the reason for that is because we have the best response available. But if it's the experience doesn't match it then we're always going to be saying in Australia we're pushing shit uphill. No way I can describe it. You are going to be pedaling a lot harder to try and move because you know you on one side you've got things running really well. But over here the foundational things haven't been getting fixed, so it doesn't matter what you do here. It needs to have on this side.

## Interviews Reviewers

**Interviewee (IE):** Susana Passinhas  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 03-05-2019

*IR:* From the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online review influence your purchasing decisions?

*IE:* Well, I do not go necessarily to check the reviews. First, I only check them when I am in doubt with something because if I see something that is very cheap or it is very expensive, then I confirm why but if it is normal than usual, I do not see it. But I use it mainly to confirm decision. So, if I am in doubt then I will go looking to the reviews to see, okay if people like it, I will do it and if they don't, I will pass.

*IR:* And where do you look at? Is it the star rating or the quantity of reviews?

*IE:* Not so much the rating. What I do is, I usually read the first three. I do not care so much about the ratings because that is what I already saw before but when I want to go deeper, understanding and read the first three, not more than that.

*IR:* The literature confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

*IE:* Yes of course because everything that is published creates an image and they usually people review when there is a problem, not so many people feel that they have to say it is ok because they assume, they already paying for the service to be good. So, usually when they complain it is because something is wrong and if everybody is complaining because there is something, everybody will think it is not a good service but actually from 10 who said that it is wrong, 1000 like it. That's why they didn't say anything.

*IR:* Yes exactly. And if you publish an online review, is it because you are satisfied or unsatisfied?

*IE:* [8.1 Motivation to write online reviews] Usually it is only extremes. Either I am super unsatisfied, something went wrong, or I am really really happy. So, it just went well as expected usually I do not say anything.

*IR:* Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

*IE:* [8.2 Personalization] Well, a remarkable experience is something when it is above expectation and then you will share it everywhere. You will share it with your friends, with your family, in every situation you talk about the caution like 'Oh this hotel was so nice'. So, it is having to be with the outstanding or being above from what is expected. This is like the ultimate experience. So, you can think I am going to a four-star hotel and I expect, because I pay a lot, that the service is good. But if it is even better or people are very nice or I have a gift in my room, then I am going to tell and not only on the reviews online. The more personalized it is, the better.

*IR:* And the second part is the encourage part and it is about the quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that companies ask their customers to publish an online review. What motivates you to write an online review? And why?

IE: Only if I have a discount. I do not like that the system. I think online reviews are just dead, they are not mandatory by the hotel that asks, "can you write an online review?". It should be something that people write about themselves because they want. Either there is a problem or there is like a super good aspect about it.

IR: So, what is the technique that a company can use to encourage you to write an online review?

IE: [8.3 Ask for reviews] I think the discount and just offer the best service possible because then people will do it by themselves. What you can do to encourage people is also to answer them. So, when you have a bad review or something went wrong, people can review in everywhere. [8.4 Respond strategies] It is a bit hard to keep track on all this online review. What you can do is the service, the experience is absolutely great and that it is. Nothing else. There is no magic for online to be better. Is the service being good, there will be no problem at all. And when there is a bad service or there is a bad review, you just need to go to see that review as the hotel management reply, improve that you improved something.

IR: How can a company show that they actual improved?

IE: [8.5 Analyze business success and improvement] Following up on this person. I will give you a case. So, for example, you have this guy, you go to this hotel and he is really upset because the shower did not have enough warm water and he paid a lot. So, he goes, and he writes a review, everything was good, but I had to take a shower, cold water and it was winter. So in here, what you could do as a hotel management, you can follow up this review and say that you had a problem on the pipes, we are very sorry, we are happy to welcome you back or to give him a voucher or to do something that he could use in his life without coming to this specific hotel and maybe it could be also like, okay we improved this, we take a picture and made the shower after you. This kind of this are a little bit more playful.

So, if the hotel has Instagram for example, it is perfectly ok in my opinion. So, "we have problems with the shower, the most upset customer was Maikel and we now fixed it, the room 223". I do not know. That types of things because then people, say ok, these problems happen, and it is ok.

IR: And you were mentioning in Instagram before but what type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews?

IE: [8.6 Review Platforms] Booking.com, because I usually make bookings through Booking.com.

IR: And what about Google Reviews and TripAdvisor, do you use them as well or not? Why?

IE: No, I do not know but I do not use them.

IR: And the fourth part is the responding part so how a company should react to their reviews. How would you like to get responded to your review?

IE: [8.7 Respond strategies] In a very human way. I think you need to be honest, polite and just reply.

IR: And according to your opinion, a company has to respond to all the reviews or is it just like mainly the negative ones or the outstanding ones?

IE: I think they should reply to all of them equally but if the hotel has to hire two people to answer reviews, bad reviews, then it is crazy. It depends on the size of the hotel, but it should not be every single little person in the world to be answered but at least they need to have some answers.

IR: Thank you. This were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE: To be honest I am not very aware of the strategies you have but what I see that is that a couple of years ago you will write reviews but nobody will reply to you but what I see now, the management of the hotels they go into reply and say this and that so it is much more human, like, relation which is very good but for me this is, you know, if the problem is the bad reviews then fix the right problem. The problem is not the bad reviews, the problem is the service. So, you just need to start by there and then anything will change of course.

Interviewee (IE): Thomas v/d Berg  
Interviewer (IR): Yvette Wieberdink  
Date: 07-05-2019

IR: From the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online review influence your purchasing decisions?

IE: Well, depends on what I am planning to purchase or if it is for a hotel or restaurant check some reviews. If there is a very frequent bad review, then I will not go to that place. So yes, it really depends on what it is and how bad or good the reviews are. But if you go to a place you do not know, you definitely go to check the reviews.

IR: And where are you mainly looking at? Is it the star rating or the quantity of reviews?

IE: The star rating is of course the first thing you see but then you read the first three or four reviews just quickly through. That is basically what makes your decisions.

IR: And from the literature it also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

IE: Yes, because if your reviews are bad nobody will come anymore to your place and the people who come already have a bad feeling before they enter your hotel or restaurant or whatever. So yes, the chance that it is more negative is even bigger. And of course, they influence your sales.

IR: Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE: For me a remarkable experience is that a product or service is such remarkable that you keep reminding it and it might be a reason to be back.

IR: And how can a company impact that on your experience?

IE: If there are a step ahead out of my needs or they know how to surprise you or come with new things or new ideas. I think that is a great level of service.

IR: And could you give me an example of that? How they can surprise you?

IE: In what case would you like to know that? In a case of a restaurant or a hotel?

IR: Let's say a hotel.

IE: [9.1 Personalization] In a case of a hotel, if you just enter the hotel, they already know your name or they be kind in the way they approach you or the rooms, are they complimentary. Things they offer you. From the total guest experience, from A to Z.

IR: And the second part is the encourage part and it is about the quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that companies ask their customers to publish an online review. What motivates you to write an online review? And why?

IE: [9.2 Motivation to write online reviews] I only do it when I am very satisfied so when it is a remarkable experience, [9.3 Ask for reviews] I would give it a review or if someone really ask me, because you were satisfied, would you mind to put an online review? Then I will consider to do it. Otherwise, most of the times I would just leave it and also, I don't write bad reviews because I know how powerful it is.

IR: So, in that case you would just reach the company personally or?

IE: [9.4 Problem resolved before departure] Yes, I would say it to them, or I would reach them personal because I think it is unfair because you see what power it is on online reviews nowadays. So, I think it is unfair because people judge you already before they have experienced it themselves. So, I rather prefer to do personal contact during the visit.

IR: And if a company encourage you to publish an online review, would you also do it then?

IE: [9.5 Ask for reviews] In some cases, I would do but I would like to do it more when it is a survey or like an enquete or something like that. So that is for their own needs, not online published.

IR: The monitor part involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. What type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews? Why?

IE: [9.6 Review Platforms] I would check TripAdvisor or Booking.com, Expedia. Yes, maybe Trivago. Maybe these are the main things that I should look.

IR: And what about Google Reviews, do you use this platform either or?

IE: I have never used it before.

IR: And is there a reason for?

IE: No, not specifically no. It also depends on what you search online what comes up and that is what you read.

IR: And the fourth part is the responding part and it involves how a company should react to their reviews. How would you like to get responded to your review? Why?

IE: [9.7 Respond strategies] Well, it depends if it is a positive or negative but I think they always should respond because it is a way how you can show your future guest that you take everything serious what you do and if it was a bad review then I would be more satisfied if they reply, trying to understand what went wrong and maybe talk with improvement solutions so ever. It is really the way how they react. If needed, if there is a solution like they can offer something, but I think, probably you are already too late.

IR: And the last stage is about analyzing the company's success and need of improvement. What would you like to see how companies are dealing with your reviews in case of having a complaint or the previous review had a complaint about something, what would you like to see how the company improved it actual? Is it by posting pictures or?

IE: How they should it handle it internally you mean?

IR: No, externally towards the reviewers. Let's say some reviewers have a complaint about the shower that is not working, and those reviews are mainly about the shower but as a company, how can you show your future guests that you fixed your shower, online?

IE: I do not think it have to be shown by pictures or something like that. I think it is important to react on it quickly and on a proper way but to respond with pictures and stuff, like that, I think it is not necessary because people who booked already your hotel, do not even know how the shower is so I do not think it makes any sense.

IR: And this were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE: Maybe the best, if it is online or not, most of the hotels they try to work as much possible or paperless or more and more online but [9.8 Problem resolved before departure] I think it is good if you can try to operate a solution to people who gave their opinion during their stay. So, if there is something, they can act on it immediately, they can still solve it and the guest will leave happy anyway. That is how I experience it. If a complaint is handled correctly, you are probably even more happier and the chance you will return is also higher.

**Interviewee (IE):** Angel Wung  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 07-05-2019

IR: From the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online review influence your purchasing decisions?

IE: So, let's take Google for example. Whenever I try to find a restaurant, I am always going to Google Reviews. So, if there are high stars or good reviews for that restaurant, I will definitely go there.

IR: And how many reviews you consider reading it before making your purchasing decision?

IE: It is really based on how many reviews are there. So, for example, if there are 200+ review, I will go to like 10+, even 20 to make sure everything is fine over there.



IR: Is the star rating also influenced?

IE: Star rating, yes definitely. I am always looking for restaurants over 4.5 stars.

IR: And the literature also confirmed that affect the online reputation and the sales of a company. Do you share this statement?

IE: Yeah, I totally agree with that because consumers nowadays check if they pay their money in a more efficient way, not wasting their money. So, definitely yes.

IR: Out of my research I concluded that ORM strategy consists of the following five aspects. I would like to speak about each step of that with you. The first part it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience. What in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE: I will just bring it back to a project I have done before with Gucci. So, in that project I was signed to be a mystery shopper. So, what I did, I just enter the shop, talk to the sales person and asking them several questions regarding brands or the material or the current trend of the brand and that's related to remarkable experience. It is like when you enter a room, you have to be treated properly which matching your expectations.

IR: And how can a company match your expectations? Could you give me an example of you going to a hotel or renting a campervan?

IE: So, I will take the hotel. [10.1 Managing expectations] So, for example, when I enter a five-star hotel I kind of expect the people will greet me, will help me carry all my luggage, bring me directly to the counter and providing me some drinks and explain everything to me and help me to check-in. So, the process shouldn't take long so I don't have to sit there waiting for them to greet me. They have to approach me.

IR: And the second part is the encourage part and it is about the quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that companies ask their customers to publish an online review. What motivates you to write an online review? And why?

IE: [10.2 Motivation to write online reviews] So, this one I will take my experiences in AirBnB. If I just go to the house and I realize the host is amazing and provides me a lot of information about surroundings, I was warm greeted then I will write definitely a review for that person. If not, sometimes, well I might complain a little bit but most of the times I will just ignore it. I wouldn't leave any review because I am not happy the general experience.

IR: And what technique does a company have to use to encourage you to write an online review? Is it like asking for you during the check-out or maybe reaching you by e-mail?

IE: Both will do but [10.3 Ask for reviews] if they send me an e-mail, I barely open it. I will just ignore the email but if they mention that during the check-out process and they leave me some time, for example, they help me with other thing and they ask me to do the review, I will definitely do it. I just need to have some time.

IR: And the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. What type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews? Why?

IE: [10.4 Review platforms] I definitely go for TripAdvisor. I think most of the time I just go Google it and I will check something, other people's blog or those kinds of things to get a general idea of the places I am going to visit.

IR: And the fourth part is the responding part and it involves how a company should react to their reviews. How would you liked to get responded to your review? Why?

IE: So, if I publish it, in public let's say. Let's take AirBnb for example again. [10.5. Respond strategies] So, if I publish it online I am happy to receive a feedback directly right under my review, by a comment or something, that is totally lovely. And sometimes I will be happy if they send me a direct e-mail or private message.

IR: And why?



*IE:* It is more customized. They respect my feeling, my experiences and everything and they are happy to talk about it.

*IR:* And according to your opinion, a company should respond to all the reviews?

*IE:* Well, it would definitely help increasing customer experiences but sometimes, some customer, they are worried about it. [10.6 Respond strategies] I would say, the company could have a general message to each customer but at the same time, if a customer provides really a useful review to the company, maybe the company could do something like customized their message and put out a communication channel with the customer.

**Interviewee (IE):** Vincenzo Cretella  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 08-05-2019

*IR:* From the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online review influence your purchasing decisions?

*IE:* They are really important for us because we understand if our units are working well also if the strategy and the prices are correct or if we have to change something to replace something. So, they are really important to understand how we are working and what our guests thinking about us.

*IR:* And I will stay one moment at the first question. If for instance, you are going to a hotel or to a restaurant and you are going to look the online reviews. Where do you look at? Is it the star rating or the total amount of positive/negative reviews?

*IE:* You should have a look to 360 degree. So, you have to look at the star rating or the total amount of reviews and you shouldn't only read the last one, but you should have an idea, a better idea, reading mostly all or a part of them and but I do not know why. I usually first look at the negative ones and then I am going to check the positives.

*IR:* And now we will go to the second question. The literature also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of the company. Do you share this statement?

*IE:* Yes, it is very important at the moment and the reputation of a company is based, mostly, only on the reviews. When you work mostly on internet you can show the accommodation to the guests using only pictures or words to describe your units. People have to trust you to rent this accommodation. So, for sure they are going to check the reviews. It is the only one tool they have to trust you.

*IR:* And out of my research I conclude that did an online review management strategy consists of the following five aspects and I would like to discuss each aspect with you. The first one is creating remarkable experience and it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience but what in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

*IE:* Well, usually, [11.1 Managing expectations] I always give a warm welcome at the arrival at our guests. We try to create a confidential relationship with them, and we do some talk and then we explain them everything about the apartment, the villa's they booked. How we explain about the town they are staying, how to travel around because they have to go around. They have to visit also the town around and of course we gave them many suggestions about food, restaurants. We are always reachable, available for them and we try to assist them during their stay.

*IR:* And the second part is the encourage part and it's about a quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that a company has to ask their customers to publish an online review. But what motivates you to write an online review and why?

*IE:* [11.2 Motivation to write online reviews] I think at the moment it is a must for me. I have to leave my feedback in order to help the guests coming after me. So, that's why I always leave a feedback or a review.

*IR:* Even if it was a good stay or a poor stay?

*IE:* Both the cases of course. I mean, you do not have to leave a feedback only if you had a bad stay. You should you leave a positive feedback if you had a nice stay or had a nice time.

IR: And what technique does a company have to use to encourage you to write an online review?

IE: I usually send them an e-mail at the of their stay or the check-out because of course they do need time if they liked it or not their stay, some guests may change in a positive or negative way in one week. So, you have to give them the right time to understand, so an e-mail at the end on their stay or the check-out and then if they have booked some famous web reporters such as booking.com or HomeAway. It is the website that push them to put them to leave a review, the check-out. Sometimes you do not need to do because they do it for you.

IR: And how can a company encourage you? So, if you visit a hotel and you are going to check-out and they will ask you to write an online review, will you do that for them?

IE: **[11.3 Ask for reviews]** Of course, why not? I mean, that is how it works at the moment so no problem.

IR: And the fourth part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guest opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers. What type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews and why?

IE: **[11.4 Review platforms]** Honestly, I always double check TripAdvisor. This is the first and it is always the original one. But of course, as I told you before, Booking.com, HomeAway. All these offer the possibility to check the reviews so, you can find a review mostly everywhere on internet but for me TripAdvisor is always the first and the original one.

IR: Thank you so much. And the last stage is analyzing the company's successes and need of improvement. What would you like to see how companies are dealing with your online reviews? And why?

IE: **[11.5 Respond strategies]** Honestly, I always like when a person spent time to write me a couple of words or sentences. It is really nice to see when someone is not using a standard form or reply that the can spent some time to write something. So, I do not like to see standard forms or something like that. I like to feel warm sentences. I do not know how to explain. Sometimes someone will write something using not the standard sentences.

IR: And according to your opinion, a company have to respond to all the reviews? Or just to the negative ones or the positive ones?

IE: **[11.6 Respond strategies]** I mean it is really important they answer to the negative ones because have the possibility to defend itself if it is really negative you have to answer that and you have to explain what you think and if they are right, you have to write it down and fix that problem, that issue. So, you have to answer for sure the negative one but of course you have to spend some time to the positive ones because the guest has been really kind to post a positive feedback even if it is a short answer.

IR: Thank you so much Vincenzo. This were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

IE: Yes, I think that reviews are really important, but they should not influence your decision at 100%. I mean, they are essential at the moment in the tourism industry but do not forget that sometimes the judgement is really personal. Do not forget that.

**Interviewee (IE):** Andrew Clarkey  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 08-05-2019

IR: OK thank you so much Andrew. Now we will go to the first interview question from the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online reviews influence your purchasing decisions?

IE: It's a good question. I think they are very important you know in an increasingly digital age I find myself trusting the opinion of others far more than what the company releases simply because there is no incentive for them to lie if they had a good experience or a bad one. I would like to know about it so hopefully that answer the question.

IR: Yes, if you look at the online reviews before making a purchase decision. Do you look at the star rating or the quality of the review?

IE: The first thing I look at is the number of positive reviews. Usually it stars or whatever metric on the website I am using isn't cloying. And then after that I'll go look into the comments and see if there's any particular stories that resonate with me.

IR: Thank you. And the literature also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of the company. Do you share this statement?

IE: Absolutely. I think it's very accurate.

IR: And why?

IE: because I know obviously I think that the consumer who is buying or purchasing or experiencing a product or venue is going to give a much more realistic depiction of what happened to them instead of the company putting out their own reviews because you know there's an opportunity for bias there.

IR: And out of my research I conclude that did an online review management strategy consists of the following five aspects and I would like to discuss each aspect with you. The first one is creating remarkable experience and it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature it appears about creating remarkable experience but what in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE: I may ask you to define a little bit more what you mean by a remarkable experience so is there a specific type of product that I am reviewing?

IR: For instance, you are visiting a hotel in this case and what makes your stay in this hotel outstanding?

IE: Yes, that's a good example. [12.1 personalization] So, if I were going to stay at a hotel something like them having my preferences from last time knowing some of the things, I did make sure that if I put any requests in beforehand that those were accommodated in overall pleasant staff. I travel a lot for work and so you know people who look like they're happy and enjoying their job make me feel the same way.

IR: And how can they create this like this remarkable experience during your stay?

IE: I think that the number one thing we chose hotels because I'm there a lot. [12.2 Managing expectations] Honestly, I think that a well-trained and positive staff makes a lot more difference. I mean at the end of the day you know a bed is a bed but if the people around the you know in the company are happy to be there then you will be too. I think that's a good way of putting it. But let me know if you want to expand further.

IR: Thanks. And the second part is the encourage part and it's about a quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that a company has to ask their customers to publish an online review. But what motivates you to write an online review and why?

IE: So, what motivates me to read an online review. [12.3 Motivation to write online reviews] So, I think that there's two instances in which I would like to write an online review and they're kind of polar opposite. So, the first is going to be if I had an incredible experience and the company informed me that they valued my contribution via review I would be happy to do it. [12.4 Ask for reviews] You know if for example if I had a really great CEO and tell him they said thank you so much. Could you please read a review, I would be compelled to do so [12.3 Ask for reviews] or if I had an absolutely abhorrent time, I would write on the Internet that I had a poor time. So basically, you need to go between the two extremes. I'm not really a person who write a review for a three-star experience. I would rather give it a five or a one but hopefully that gives you some.

IR: And the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guests opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers but what type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews?

IE: So, I would trust any of the major aggregators. So, I know Yelp is one of them. Google has their own review platform. And then if it's online shopping you know [12.4 Review platforms] [12.4 Review platforms] I trust Amazon's review system. But I guess I would go to the industry leader I know TripAdvisor for example is pretty well respected and I have gone there before so you know kind of the

major marketers are where I look to first because simply, they have the largest volume of reviews against me.

IR: And do you notice google reviews are upcoming. Are you aware of this?

IE: I did not know. I thought there was when I whenever I go into maps, I just take a look at how many stars the location or venue has. But if there's going to be another independent platform that's news to me it's interesting.

IR: And the fourth part is the responding part and it involves how a company should react to their reviews. But how would you like to get responded to your review?

IE: [12.5 Respond strategies] I mean I think that the best way to do so would be if they could contact me via whatever platform I am responding at would be even better if they had an email. An example that I have very recently as I was going on a flight and the woman behind the counter that my bags fly free because I had a large amount of luggage I was actually moving to Europe so and I wrote a review for her and they contacted me directly by e-mail. And so, they appreciate my feedback. So, anything that's kind of direct and wherever I submitted the review originally would be best in my humble opinion.

IR: And according to your opinion a company has to respond to all their reviews or just to the extreme ones?

IE: [12.6 Respond strategies] I think they need to respond to all of them. The length and content on which they are responding to should be commensurate with you know how detailed or how you know the gravity of the message. So, for example if someone wrote a really bad review and it was an accurate that I think they need to get on there and correct the record and spend a lot of time you know illustrating what is an accurate about the review. But if it was just a comment saying that they had a good time then they can respond with a sentence as well just saying thanks for staying with me.

IR: With an automatic message or is it according to your opinion always with a personal approach?

IE: So, a personal approach is going to be best but for scalability automatic messages are probably going to be easier to do I think that there is a happy medium in between both to be honest with you.

IR: And what would you like to see how companies are dealing with your online reviews? For instance, you have a complaint about the service of the hotel. How would you like to see that they take your complaints into consideration and they improve it?

IE: [12.7 Analyze business success and improvement] So, anything that's tangible you know anything that's tangible or shows that whatever I was unsatisfied with got corrected would be fantastic. You know for example if I was overcharged or something like that then they give you some sort of drink voucher or just you know something tangible that not only a would get you back in the location but B would kind of assuage your original complaint if that makes any sense.

IR: Well Andrew, this were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an online review management strategy?

IE: No. Only that I think that they're going to be increasingly popular as people continue to look to the internet for places to go and things to do and that's in the digital age. I think that they're a very important strategy for companies to focus on.

**Interviewee (IE):** Evelina Kontrimaité  
**Interviewer (IR):** Yvette Wieberdink  
**Date:** 09-04-2019

IR: Now we will go to the first interview question from the literature it appears that online reviews are set to be a very powerful tool to influence purchase decisions. How does online reviews influence your purchasing decisions?

IE: Well actually, usually before purchasing anything, if there are any reviews, I will take a look at them and read if they are negative or positive and especially take a look at the rating. So, if, there is stars rating and if there it is more positive, then I am more positively involved to buy something and if it is completely negative then I probably will choose another product instead of that one.

IR: And how many reviews do you read before you make your purchase decision?

IE: I think usually up to ten, maybe five reviews.

IR: And what is the average star rating that influence your purchase decision?

IE: I think if it is more than 3.5, then doesn't affect my purchase decision that much. So, I would positively take a look at it.

IR: And the literature also confirmed that online reviews affect the online reputation and the sales of the company. Do you share this statement?

IE: Yes, I believe that this statement is true because as I already said, I also take a look at the online reviews so if it affects my purchase decisions, then probably it also affects others.

IR: And out of my research I conclude that did an online review management strategy consists of the following five aspects and I would like to discuss each aspect with you. The first one is creating remarkable experience and it says that people have to know about what to review and in the literature, it appears about creating remarkable experience but what in your understanding is a remarkable experience?

IE: [13.1 Managing expectations] In an example of a hotel. A remarkable experience involves a lot of details from the entrance, then you have all the receptions. So, people that welcomes you and all the look of the reception and the look of the rooms and the other facilities that the hotel will have. Does it have a pool, does it have a terrace, is there a bar? Is it being a nice one? Are there any more facilities involved? So, really the remarkable experience I think it concludes the all package of this and if they have anything more to offer than just a bed where you can sleep.

IR: Ok, and having more to offer in your understanding is just the facilities or also the staff?

IE: Of course, the staff is really a big add to it. Because if people would be unfriendly or helpful at all you cannot ask them anything, of course it will be a complimentary experience.

IR: Thanks. And the second part is the encourage part and it's about a quantity of reviews a company has on their review platforms and it also involves that a company has to ask their customers to publish an online review. But what motivates you to write an online review?

IE: [13.2 Motivation to write online reviews] Well, usually, personally I write a review either if I have an exceptional and good service or something exceptionally bad. So, when it is something average it doesn't encourage me to write something because that's what you usually expect. So, if there is something unexpected in the service, either it is bad or good, usually I write a review.

IR: And what technique does a company have to use to encourage you to write an online review?

IE: [13.3 Ask for reviews] Yes, actually if they would be nicely encouraging to write a review for example, when I am using Airbnb there are people who do not have so much reviews, so they usually ask you to make a review to encourage others to stay at their place. So, yes that usually encourage me a lot and reminding by e-mail that also really helps a lot because sometimes you just come back from the trip and you forget to write a review so just a reminder is also a very good way to do it.

IR: Thank you and the third part is the monitor part and it involves being aware of guests opinions by using certain systems to understand the feedback of customers but what type of review platforms do you consider reading online reviews?

IE: [13.4 Review platforms] Usually before going on a trip I take a look at TripAdvisor.

IR: And why TripAdvisor?

IE: Why TripAdvisor because it has quite a nice ranking of the activities in the hotels so you can already see the first place or the second place. So, the ranking is really important, and it has the same stars ranking and reviews part where you can actually leave other experience of other people. They also have the pictures of the places, so you can also take a look at the real and not so beautiful made pictures. But the pictures of real people how they saw the place. So, it seems really relevant and really trustworthy platform. And for the hotels, I also take a look at Booking reviews or any other platform that I am booking from. So, it is either Hotels.com or Booking.com. So, all of them through, that's actually where I am booking.

*IR:* And is Google Reviews also influencing your purchase decisions or you never watch on Google Reviews?

*IE:* I actually never watch Google Reviews. From time to time but it is really rarely that I take a look at Google Reviews.

*IR:* And the fourth part is the responding part and it involves how a company should react to their reviews. But how would you like to get responded to your review?

*IE:* [13.5 Respond strategies] It would be really nice if the company answer at least in several words. "Thank you for your review". So that you actually know they actually noticed it. But not only when it is bad that they are answering "Oh, I am sorry". But also, when you write a good review, that they noticed it and that they appreciate it. So that will be really nice.

*IR:* Ok, and according to your opinion, a company to respond to all the reviews?

*IE:* [13.6 Respond strategies] At least in a few words I believe they should answer to every review.

*IR:* And the last stage is analyzing the company's success and need of improvement. How would you like to see how companies are dealing with your online review in case of a complaint?

*IE:* [13.7 Analyze business success and improvement] First of all, I would like to get an answer why the service wasn't good as I expected and if they would do anything to change it. So, if they will take any type of actions to change or was it my mistake and they won't do anything. At least a kind of reaction and that it will be followed by action.

*IR:* Thank you. This were actually my interview questions. Is there something you would like to add concerning an ORM strategy?

*IE:* No, I think it is quite clear what we were speaking here.

## Appendix VI Code Tree

Axial coding	Open coding	Fragments
<b>Remarkable experience</b>	Personalization	1.2, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 6.1
	Standardization	7.1
	Problem resolved before departure	1.1, 1.3, 2.2
	Managing expectations	3.3, 4.1, 5.10
<b>Encouragement</b>	Ask for reviews	1.4, 2.12, 3.4, 4.2, 5.2, 5.3, 6.2, 6.10, 7.2
<b>Monitor</b>	Review platforms	1.12, 2.3, 3.5, 4.3, 6.3, 7.3
	System to track online reviews	1.5, 1.8, 2.4, 2.6, 3.7, 3.13, 4.4, 4.5, 5.3, 5.4, 6.5, 7.4
	Fake reviews	2.8, 1.7, 6.4
<b>Responding</b>	Respond strategies	1.6, 1.10, 2.5, 3.8, 3.10, 4.7, 5.5, 5.7, 5.12, 6.7, 7.5
<b>Acting upon</b>	Analyze business success and improvement	1.9, 2.7, 2.10, 3.9, 3.11, 4.6, 4.8, 5.6, 5.9, 5.11, 6.8, 7.6
<b>Financial implications</b>	ORM costs	2.9, 3.6, 3.12, 5.8, 6.9, 7.7

Table 9. Code tree with experts

Axial coding	Open coding	Fragments
<b>Remarkable experience</b>	Personalization	8.2, 9.1, 12.1,
	Problem resolved before departure	9.8,
	Managing expectations	10.1, 11.1, 12.2, 13.1,
<b>Encouragement</b>	Ask for reviews	8.3, 9.3, 9.5, 10.3, 11.3, 12.4,
	Motivation to write online reviews	8.1, 9.2, 10.2, 11.2, 12.3, 13.2
<b>Monitor</b>	Review platforms	8.6, 9.6, 10.4, 11.4, 12.4, 13.4,
<b>Responding</b>	Respond strategies	8.4, 8.7, 10.6, 11.5, 11.6, 12.5, 12.6, 13.5,
<b>Acting upon</b>	Analyze business success and improvement	8.5, 12.7,

Table 10. Code Tree interview Reviewers

## Appendix VII Responding to reviews



Image 1. Example responding to negative reviews (Source; Reviewtrackers)

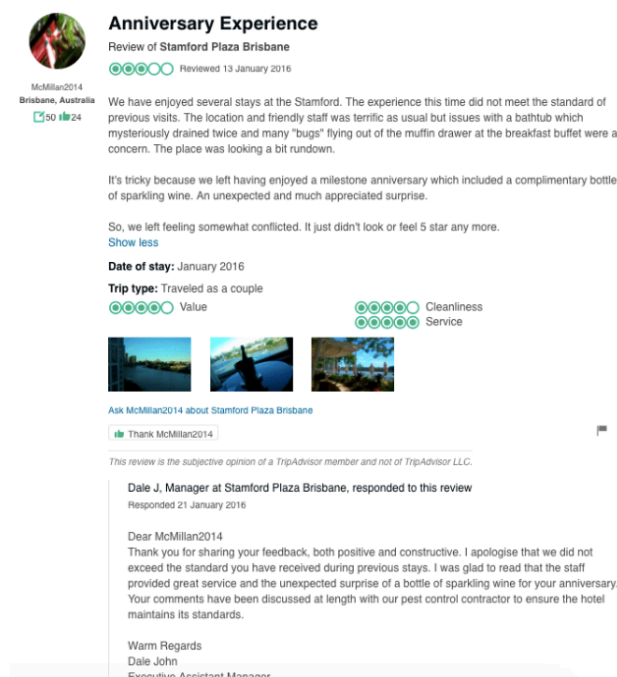


Image 2. Example responding to neutral reviews (Source; Reviewtrackers)