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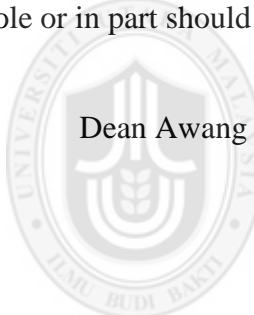
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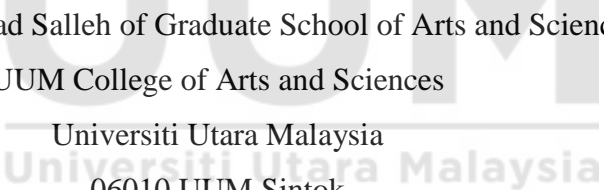
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ABSTRACT

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

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

ABSTRAK

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

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

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ICT: Information Communication Technology

SNS: Social Network Site

MAH: Malaysian Association of Hotel

SMM: Social Media Marketing

UGC: User Generate Content

WOM: Word of Mouth

CHAPTER ONE
OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

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

1.2 Background

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

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According to Johnson (2011), sixty-four percent of customers visit a brand's website before making purchases. If the trademark can attract more customers to its website, the sales could increase (Touchette, Schanski & Lee, 2015). In tourism industry, it is commonly known that people use the Internet to decide which hotel to stay at during their holiday. However, in the last two decades, the development of Web technologies (such as social media) has altered the features of websites by making them more interactive, participating, and user-centric (Leung, Bai & Stahura, 2013).

Social media is considered an effective marketing network to be utilized in marketing tourism industry (Cooke & Buckley, 2008; Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013). It has an influence on the organizations' performance in terms of improvement of relationships with customers, earning information about consumers and enhancement in access to information and reduce the cost in terms of customers' service and marketing (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015), in ensuring they sustain in their competitive advantage (Fidzani & Caughey, 2015). The industry's competitive nature has increased due to increased growth with technology, globalization and innovation (Tajeddini, 2010; Leung, Bai & Stahura, 2013; Lee, Young, & Knowles; 2013) because it gathers massive number of users (Ab Hamid, Razak, Akhir, & Cheng, 2013).

With such huge advantages, social media has reshaped the way information related to tourism is disseminated and organized the plan for travelers (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Munar, 2012). Besides, social media tools allow potential travelers to collect a wide variety of multimedia information from different sources and use the experiences shared by others as guides (Roque & Raposo, 2013). For that reason, social media has

not only been a communication tool for amusement, but is also considered an important tool in enhancing marketing and communication strategies for hotel industry (Minazzi & Lagrosen, 2013; Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014). Recently, online customers' engagement has become very significant for firms struggling in building-up their brand and it has been one of the most important elements in creating a competitive advantage (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). In order to face the stiff competition, hotel operators have to exploit all potentials offered by social media (Buhalis & Mamalakis, 2015), which could accelerate the development of public relation between practitioners and customers who influence the success or failure of the companies (DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013).

Nevertheless, the travelers' purchase intention, word-of-mouth intention, and attitudes towards destination brands are positively affected by customers' social media engagement (such as like, comment, and retweet) and user-generated-content (UGC) (Yu & Zou, 2015). In such context, activities of social media engagement positively affect the companies' reputation, particularly among non-customers (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). One of the very powerful influence is word-of-mouth (WOM) from family and friends (Nielsen, 2012).

Sotiriadis and van Zyl (2013) found that social media has enabled WOM with a broad range of platforms, which make travelers more freely and quickly share their travel-related experiences and impression with peer travel consumers without geographic and time restrictions. Regarding that, Qvick (2014, p. 2) expresses *"…Social media can be considered same as word-of-mouth, as in both forms it is expected that the consumer starts the conversation and keeps it alive"*. SocialBakers (2014) found that the amount of interactions on social media leads to an intensified visit to the website. This is agreed

with McCarthy, Rowley, Jane Ashworth, and Pioch (2014), who mentioned that social media has the potential to deliver engagement and interaction, traffic flow to official websites and commercial gain.

Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden (2015) pointed out, customers that engage with their favorite brands on social media have stronger relation with those brands compared with customers who do not interact with their favorite brands using social media. Through a two-way interaction, social media helps the branding efforts because it develops a customers' engagement with the brand. Therefore, and based on the arguments in previous paragraphs, the engagement can be deemed as a core pillar for firms when they use the modern technologies for the competition and enhancement of their reputation.

1.3 Problem Statement and Motivation

The tourism sector has been deemed a driver of economic outgrowth and one of the major service industries in many countries (Bowe, Lockshin, Rungie & Lee, 2015; Hosseini, Mohd-Roslin & Mihanyar, 2014; Klimek, 2013). In Malaysia, the hotel industry is one of the major areas influencing the local economic growth (Tong, 2014). Deloitte (2010) found that new technology trends and social media play an important role on the way the hotel industry develops (Rosman & Stuhura, 2013). However, Ali, Roslan, Mahmood, and Venugopal (2015) discover that the social media sites for hotels in Malaysia have not been updated with informative information. It is quite disadvantageous when the social media tools are not well-utilized by local hotels. This study believes that social media tools are very powerful in reaching potential customers, with minimal cost, as addressed by Serben (2014).

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Additionally, this wide and open platform enables customers to play a bigger role than just being simple users. In such context, the social media tools enable them to become innovators and producers through sharing and recreating information (Dong & Wu, 2015; Von-Hippel, 2005), positively affecting customers' purchase decisions (Song, Yoo & Cobanoglu, 2016), encouraging the building and development of wider communities for the brand (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013; Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009), and enhancing the marketing activities for hotels (Radwan, 2016).

According to the Burson-Marsteller Asia Pacific (2011), Malaysian tourism firms have been utilizing social media for marketing and communicating activities. In fact, the results of the study discloses that among the companies in Southeast Asian, companies in Malaysia, Thailand, and Phillippines have invested a lot in social media. From the government alone, about RM18 million has been invested on social media for promotional campaigns promoting Malaysia (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013).

However, despite the investment usage of social media and web 2.0, Malaysian hotels have not been managing their communication platform effectively, as claimed by Hashim, Murphy, Doina, and Connor (2014). This is a lacking in such context because the evaluation of social media performance has become increasingly important (Gainous & Wagner, 2014; Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015), in ensuring successful utilization (Murdough, 2009; Solis, 2010). This is very much related to the discovery by O'Connor (2011), Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013), and Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) that the understanding of benchmark indicators in measuring the use of social media in hotel industry is still limited to how to use social media and how to exploit the platform to its maximum potentials.

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Besides implementation, measurement is necessary for the evaluation and development of integrated marketing and communication programs (Kitchen, Kim, & Schultz, 2008), because it could lead to a clear strategic goal (McCorkindale & DiStaso, 2014). However, the benchmarking is still in its infancy (Ramanathan & Dreiling, 2013). Besides, engagement and participation are also critical issues that need to be examined in measuring the success of using the social media (Triantafillidou, Lappas, Yannas & Kleftodimos, 2015)

Based on the arguments in the previous paragraphs, Budd, Ismail, and Murphy (2015) underline that the practitioners and academics agree on the necessity to reexamine the way to exploit social media effectively for the hospitality industry. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand how Malaysian hotel operators are using social media to socially engage with their customers. Not only that, this study also examines the level of social engagement using social media benchmark adopted from previous works.
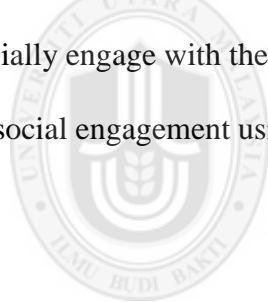
1.4 Research Questions

Based on the problem addressed in the previous section, the following questions need an urgent answer:

1. How do Malaysia hotel operators use Facebook to engage with customers?

2. How do Malaysia hotel operators measure their level of social engagement using Facebook?

3. What is the social engagement level of Malaysia hotel operators using Facebook?

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to propose a benchmark on how hotel operators should measure their engagement with customers by using social media. Particularly, this research aims at attaining the following sub-objectives:

1. To understand how Malaysia hotel operators use Facebook to socially engage with customers.

2. To identify the technique used by Malaysia hotel operators to measure their level of social engagement.

3. To assess the level of social engagement between hotel operators in Malaysia and their customers using Facebook.

1.6 Scope of Study

This study aims to measure social media engagement, and concentrates on the hotel industry, particularly five star hotels in Malaysia. These hotels were selected because they have financial ability to get and use new technology faster than small hotels (Budd et al., 2015). Pesonen (2011) showcases different ways in using Facebook between large and small tourism firms, as smaller firms own Facebook pages unnecessary and their activity less than large firms

It has been found that most of Malaysian and Australian destination management organizations use Facebook as destination marketing tool (Budd et al., 2015), which is very significant (Leung & Baloglu, 2015). In fact, Stelzner (2012) found that ninety-two percent of marketers use Facebook for communication and marketing. Accordingly, this study decides to study focuses only on Facebook as a tools for communication and marketing.

1.7 Summary of the Chapter One

This chapter underlines the important elements for this study. The first section explains the background and the importance of social media in engaging customers. It also addresses the motivation of this study. It is followed with a section that addresses the problem to be solved, the gap, and the research questions and research objectives. Nevertheless, the scope the study is established. The next chapter discusses the previous works in the literature, as the basis of this study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to shed light on the understanding of using the social media within hotel operators. This chapter consists of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Business, Web 2.0, social media, types of social media (Social Networks, Blogs, Microblogging, Multimedia Sharing Platforms, Rating and Review Platforms, Location Sharing and Annotation Platforms and Online forum), social media benefits, adoption of social media in hotel Industries, tourism in Malaysia, social media analytics, previous studies on social media metrics and social media benchmark for hotels sector, proposed benchmark based on the previous studies, elements of Facebook page and lastly, the assessment of the engagement.

2.2 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Business

Militino, Ugarte and Goicoa (2015) affirmed that, very high prominence has been assigned to ICT in the current years in personal life, government services as well as specialized activities. Generally, ICTs and specifically the Internet are both influencing the economy in great ways including the people as they are now the portion of development strategies of any countries. Also, Jorgenson and Vu (2007) stated that the widespread use of (ICTs) is crucial for economic activity and have the potential to increase productivity and boost economic growth (Ceccobelli, Gitto & Mancuso, 2012; Jorgenson, Ho & Samuels, 2011; Jorgenson, Ho & Stiroh, 2008).

According to The World Bank Group (2012), ICT plays a crucial role in business development besides helping to increase companies' competitiveness. Also, Dobija,

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Klimczak, Roztocki and Weistroffer (2012) and Delina, Packová, Roztocki and Weistroffer (2013) stated that, ICT investment have been identified as a very important tool and has significant impact on companies' performance. Whereas, most of business managers find ICT as a cheaper and easier manner to relate with external parties such as suppliers and customers besides enabling the company to address a competitive problem (Bohari, Hin & Fuad, 2013). Militino, Ugarte and Goicoa (2015) stated that, among the highly significant functions of ICTs within organization lies in improving the advertising, sales, management or human resources by assisting the firms to make use of its capabilities. Many scholars highlighted the benefits of the ICT in the organizations, such as advantage from a lower cost structure that is sustainable (e.g. Bruque & Moyano, 2007; Carbonara, 2005; Hung & Tang, 2008; Lee & Runge, 2001); less manufacture and work budgets (Corso, Martini, Pellegrini & Paolucci, 2003); better worth of goods and services (Nguyen, Sherif & Newby, 2007; Premkumar, 2003); and improve commercial processes (de Búrca, Fynes & Marshall, 2005; Levy, Powell & Yetton, 2001).

On the other hand, ICT strategy utilization is now commonly recognized in the business world as a competitive armament. Meanwhile, almost all organizations nowadays are depending highly on the use of ICT and the effects and outcomes of it in terms of several aspects i.e. reliability, responsiveness and efficiency (Albeladi, Khan & Khan, 2014). Moreover, Roberts (2007) mentioned that not only businesses but customers around the globe also realized that modern technologies are among the important mediums of communication. The utilization of these technologies in the business sector offered a number of the benefit for the companies such as availability of shopping across the globe, connectivity, cost efficiency and convenience (Khatri &

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Mittal, 2015). According to Ali and Frew (2014), the tourism is considered as one of the major industries which have benefited from ICT. Ali and Frew (2014) also stated that the use of ICT has created a more competitive environment and it has become an indispensable element of tourism business development. Berné, García-González, arcía-Uceda and Múgica (2015) asserted that the spread of use of ICT in the tourism industry has created a competitive environment and improved business performance.

Previous research works recognized the utilization of ICT by hotel industry with the goal of improving the efficiencies in their working operation (Bacheldor, 1999), enlarge their profit margin, as well as lessen the expenses (Huo, 1998). Undeniably, the way ICT have transformed the hotel industry including how firms and consumers can get advantage from ICT application have been explained in few printed works (Buhalis & Law, 2008). It has been observed that positive association is present in terms of the ICT adoption and the performance of the hotel (Sirirak, Islam & Khang, 2011). Meanwhile, in reference to Ham, Kim and Jeong (2005), there are a few ICT applications implemented widely in the hotel industry which offer few services such as reservation systems, the procurement and inventory system, Wi-Fi, e-mail, transaction using electronics and also the websites of the hotel.

Meanwhile, Mihalic and Buhalis (2013) argued that, the factor of ICT has an indirect positive influence on a firm's economic functioning that evolve by means of other competitiveness factors such as differentiation, value or image, which assist firms to maintain their effectiveness in tourism marketplace.

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2.3 Web 2.0

Constantinides and Fountain (2008) described Web 2.0 as a series of open source, interaction and internet computer programs manipulated by people. Similarly, Web 2.0 is also described by Bernal (2010) as series of motivating technologies which give people access to businesses and service in an interesting manner. Whereas, Web 2.0 has been defined by Musser and O'Reilly (2007, p. 10) as "*a set of social, economic, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the Internet—a more mature, distinct medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects"*. Web 2.0 applications sustain the establishment of informal users' network and thereby stimulating the flood of ideas and knowledge by creating, attracting, distributing, assembling and purifying the information content efficiently and competitively (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Actually, the Web 2.0, being the second stage in the Web's development is also given many names such as wisdom Web, people-centric Web, participative Web, and read/write Web where it exploits the Web in a more user-friendly and shared way, stressing associates' social relations and combined brainpower, and give additional chance for controlling the Web and to effectively occupy the people who uses it (Murugesan, 2007).

Web 2.0 can therefore be described as a later stage of web development which provides businesses a set of open source application (tools) allowing them to interact with customers by encouraging the movement of knowledge and idea and thereby creating, distributing and purifying the information content efficiently and effectively. Generally, new business models are the main focus in the concept of Web 2.0. Besides, supplying information about a product is the focus of Web 1.0. Web 2.0 had allowed a switch to services delivery that can be utilized and assembled with others services in

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a novel method and provided the interaction with end users in modern methods, empowering users to direct the significant and most worthy contents (Bernal, 2010). Moreover, Barefoot and Szabo (2010) compared web 1.0 and web 2.0 as illustrated in the table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1

The different between web 1.0 and web 2.0 (source: Barefoot and Szabo, 2010; Bernal, 2009)

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Webmaster and content contributors to update website	Webmaster and content contributors create initial site and update more dynamically and asynchronously without entire page refreshes
Web page is requested by users and reviewed in a static manner (reading)	Users interact with the page and each other through tagging, rating or comments (writing)
Focus on Companies	Focus on Communities
The communication is broadcast/ non-interactive	The communication is interactive
Owning content (individual working)	Sharing content (community sharing wisdom)
To update or create website need Professional	Amateurs can update or create account

2.4 Social Media

In recent years, social media tools have become prevailing and its adoption have increased in the world (Jiao, Gao & Yang, 2015). Following this trend among the scholars, general public has also risen in adopting these tools for their professional work (Gruzd, Staves & Wilk, 2012). For some years back, many authors have assigned various definitions to social media different from the conventional media. For instance, Weber defined it as "a *virtual environment where people with common interests share ideas and comments"* (Weber, 2009, p. 4). Zhou and Wang (2014) on the other hand defined social media as a platform that fulfills the need for interactive dialogue among organizations, communities and people. Parallel to that, Zarrella (2010) and Poynter (2010) shared the same thought about social media, where Zarrella compared it with the conventional media models such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines that fundamentally are one-way fixed broadcast technologies. Here, assuming the readers had disagreed with anything written in the newspaper, then, immediate response to the editorial board is impossible. Conversely, any person from anywhere in the world can freely create and distribute his own content and even send comments and response immediately in a social media environment.

Scott (2009) stated that, social media is a term that is not referring to different tools and technologies but how social media allow users to communicate and share information. It is a form of media which permit users to communicate and interact freely once they have internet connectivity in a social way. Social media is a collection of online applications created upon web 2.0 concepts and technology, which allow people to develop and interchange any content produced by them (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 211), gave a more precise definition of social media stating that it is "*a web-oriented services that permit people to (1) build a shared or semi-shared side view inside a restricted system, (2) a list of people with whom they share a link are pronounced (3) look at and navigate the list of their links and with the links of other people inside the same system*". The nature and classification of these links can change depending on which site is being used. Similarly, Thomas (2013, p. 7) alleged that; "*social media, in contrast with conventional media, is accumulated and created by the populace. Subject is transfer to the people online for free*". Basically, a process that is particularly occurring in the information exchange forums within a community where the member receives and share the information with other community is known as social media building (Snead, 2013).

As a conclusion, this study agrees with Boyd and Ellison's (2008) definition that a collection of online applications allow communities to form and relate with the others by permitting them to develop and interchange their created subjects.

2.5 Types of Social Media

Different types of social media platforms are available each with distinct characteristics. According to Wyrwoll (2014), social media can be categorized according to the type of metadata provided by the platforms. Figure 2.1 shows the categories of key social platforms as shown below:
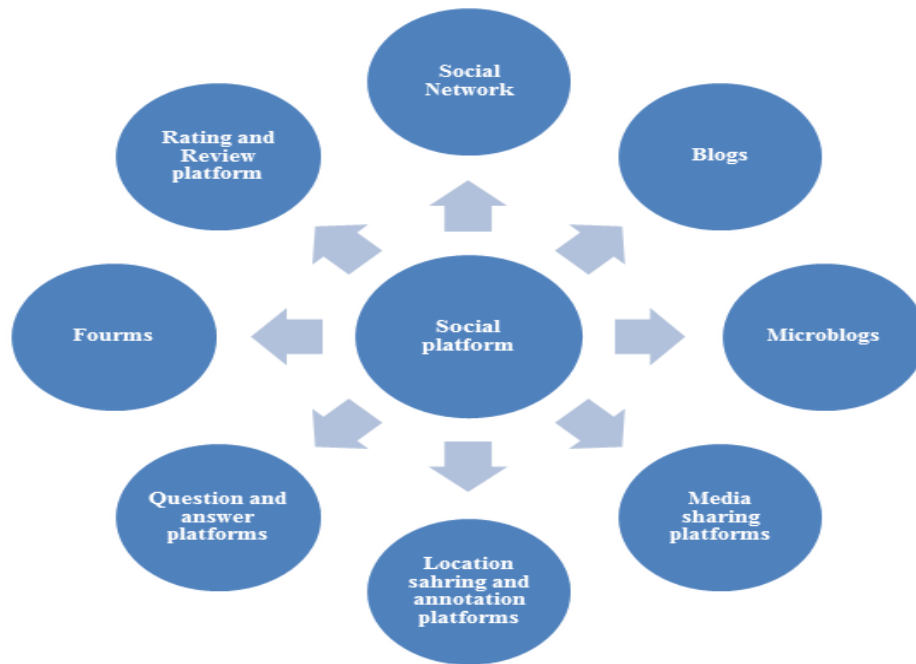
Figure 2.1 Key social platforms (Wyrwoll, 2014, p. 20)

2.5.1 Social Networks

The main goal of social networking is to bring together users and making available platform where they can freely chat without the barrier of space and times (Safko & Brake, 2009). The developments of a virtual community where people can distribute, dialogue, cooperate, as well as engaging in argument concerning issues of mutual interest is what social networking entails (Bernal, 2010). MySpace (started in 2003), LinkedIn (started in 2003), and Facebook (started in 2004) and Twitter (started in 2006) are the examples of well-known websites offering social networking services (Baruah, 2012). Bowen and Ozuem (2014) affirmed that the well-known among them are Facebook and LinkedIn.

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2.5.2 Blogs

According to Baruah (2012, p. 4) an "*online journal where a person, group, or organization put forward a record of activities, ideas, or beliefs*" is known as a blog. Also, the creation of multi-writer blogs is becoming well-known in recent times (Safko, 2010). Thus, an individual can no longer keep a blog as his own as it has become a mass medium instrument. Moreover, Technorati (2011) indicated that, 95% of the first 100 newspapers in United States such as New York Times have blogs for reporter with Bits blog has succeed in making available a steady flow of new information and assessment of technology industry all over the newspapers by writers and part-time workers. There are many websites such as Wordpress.com, Blogspot.com, and blogger.com which allow users to create blogs free of charge.

2.5.3 Micro-blogging

Micro-blogging is the same as normal blog with the fact that there is specified restriction to the number of words in one message that can be published (Baruah, 2012). Twitter is considered as a mainstream micro-blogging by the majority of researchers like Solis (2010) and Zarrella (2010). The key feature of micro-blogging is that; people are limited in how much text they can share (Bowen & Ozuem, 2014). In twitter, the maximum characters length for every each of the tweets is 140 and because of this limit, these micro-blogging posts are apparently not so dialogue-oriented and it also always has a spotlight only regarding one issue (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Usually, the focus of Micro-blogging is to create updates to others on certain issues or event.

2.5.4 Multimedia Sharing Platform

The term multimedia denotes the utilization of various artistic and communicative media (Oxford, 2011). Media sharing refers to social media application that allows users to create, store and distribute their multimedia files (photos, videos, sounds) with others (Lee, 2014). The ability to share these types of media is built into most social media sites, but some sites are dedicated to this task. The picasaweb.google.com and Flicker.com, video sharing sites such as youtube.com, slide sharing sites such as viz. slideshare.com, document sharing sites like docstoc.com are some examples of Photo-sharing sites.

2.5.5 Rating and Review Platforms

In terms of the aspect of rating and review, the platforms are specifically on the review as well as rating products, services and also experience and besides that, it can appear to be a part of platforms especially commercial platforms (Wyrwoll, 2014). This will allow the users in producing ratings as well as comments on any services or products (e.g., Qype, Ciao, Tripadvisor). User appraisal websites are essentially dedicated to such reviews though it can be used by consumers in order to express their opinion in any of the medium. The consumer's choice making standard for collecting information concerning which product or services to pay will normally start with these websites. Therefore, these types of website represent a significant consumer verbal as well as a source of giving out after purchase response. For example, TripAdvisor is known as a prominent platform where the idea of this site is that; most of the travelers depend on reviews and experiences other travelers' to plan their trips.

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2.5.6 Question and Answer Platforms

The other platform which is the question and answer platforms are of those which specifically allow the users in posting questions where anybody can post answers to it. The answers then can also be rated by other third party (Wyrwoll, 2014). Apparently, this raring function is suggested in order to find the possible answer from the provided answers available on the net. Basically, the examples for question and answer platforms are Yahoo! Answers, Gutefrage.net, Ask, and Blurtit.

2.5.7 Location Sharing and Annotation Platforms

With the location based service provided for the users nowadays, it will make it very easy for the users especially of those with group members in sharing their current location as well as annotations and apart from that, with this access, people can also see where are their location in a geographical manner specifically with the use of GPS in most mobile phones and tablets (Wyrwoll, 2014). With GPS applications, users will be able to navigate from any locations, locating others based on the map displayed as well as gaining important information regarding the traffic (Rogers, Sharp & Preece, 2011). Among the examples for location and annotation platforms are the applications such as Foursquare, Loopt, Facebook Places, and Google Latitude.

2.5.8 Online Forum

Forums are more or less as old as the Internet and represent precious cooperative knowledge storehouses (Wanas, El-Saban, Ashour & Ammar, 2008). Online forums have become one of the most popular platforms as it is easy to be accessed by users from different areas around the world thus allowing them to share information and debate the subjects of common interest (Bhatia, Biyani & Mitra, 2014). Also, forum

serves as an internet-based dialogue site which offer users opportunity to chat by posting messages; usually conversations are in a form of threads and then it will be permanently stored (Wyrwoll, 2014). A thread will revolve around a topic. It is apparently consisting of a root-posting as well as replies from other users. Besides that, it also offers open forum contents in public mode (can be read by everyone). Meanwhile, in closed forums, there is a necessity in becoming a member of the community in order to be exposed to the contents and postings. In most of the cases, there will be a need to become the member of the group or community in order to be actively participated in the discussions. It is important to note that for forums, hierarchic structure is required. Some of the examples are FUDforums, phpBB and vBulletin.

As social media has been known as one of the products based on the new technology, it has also becoming so influential in the society. Apparently, the internet has turned out to engage people socially. Based on the track record, for January 2012, 800 million people have been observed to have Facebook accounts and that was from a report by the market researcher that is ComScore. Ray (2010) stated that the time users spent on Facebook is more than that spent with Google. Also in the present time, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have been acknowledged as the most well-known platforms of social media being used by organizations (Wright & Hinson, 2011). In the same vein, Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart and Madden (2015) stated that, Facebook is still the most popular social media site, where seventy-one of the internet users are on Facebook. Thus, Facebook occupies the focus of this study. According to DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013, p. 4), Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are *"among the three of the most well-known social media platforms [that companies use] to correspondence*

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*and attract with their stakeholder*s". Facebook is accessed by 80% of organizations, Twitter is being used by 73% and YouTube is utilized by 52% (Wright & Hinson, 2012). Therefore, in this study, the researcher will focus only on the Facebook platform.

2.6 Social Media Benefits

Social media is not only providing social interaction and collaboration at the regional and national level but internationally as well (Rocha & Victor, 2009; Sigala, 2009). It is possible to employ the non-standardise way of social media to accomplish a standard objective instead of big budgets to achieve marketing objectives using its interactivity, association and communal features (Arca, 2012). Breslauer and Smith (2009) affirmed that social media are being utilized by companies to create a straightforward relationship with the clients thereby bringing out additional chance for business, share their contents, build communities, and get response from clients usually for their brand support. Some successful influence such as brand promotion through electronic-word of mouth are being offered by social media (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004) besides the capability in reaching as well as connecting a huge amount of people (Safko & Brake, 2009). Meanwhile, Enders, Hungenberg, Denker, and Mauch (2008) and Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) then affirmed that; in terms of gathering information/response from the clients, starting a two-way conversation as well as creating association with clients by means of communication and relation, social media cannot be denied as a suitable medium. In addition, with millions of users, social media tools make a suitable target for people or firms who are trying on marketing services or products to people around the world (Zamri, Darson & Wahab, 2014).

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Neuhofer and Buhalis (2012) also stated that, travellers are among the popular users of social media due to the capability of the social media to enhance travellers' affairs. According to Cox, Burgess, Sellitto and Buultjens (2009), it has already been said that; social media changes the ways how travellers and tourists search, find as well as read and it gives them total trust and at the same time give information regarding tourism. Christou and Nella (2012) claimed that nowadays a common practice for travellers is to express their views and satisfaction levels about hotels and to rate them via electronic channels such as tripadvisor.com. Previous research has shown that travel tips and hotel reviews have significant influence on a vast number of social media users (Sigala, 2007). Le and Vi (2014) said that it plays a crucial role of an information source that supports the tourists in all stages of the travel journey. Park, Lee and Han (2007) had stated that User Generate Content (UGC) is often considered to be more trustworthy and credible than marketer-generated information as the contents that were generated by the marketers will usually tend to be more of several aspects that is seen to be negative. Buhalis and Law (2008) affirmed that social media is very effective because of the increased in travelers' trust for their peers over marketing messages.

2.7 Adopting Social Media in Hotels Industry

The development of social media has dramatically changed how hotel and tourism industry produce, market and deliver their products and communicate both internally and externally (Leung & Law, 2013). Thus, the active technology adopted seems to be inevitable as a result of the benefits that ICT-provides to the hospitality industry (Ham et al., 2005). In the same vein, the social media tools are becoming increasingly crucial to hospitality industry (Olga Lo & Razaq, 2014).

Fuchs, Scholochov and Höpken (2009) also stated that the adoption and diffusion of social media in the hotels has been proliferating increasingly. Actually, the hotels can benefit from using social media tools and it has recently become the valuable tools for the international marketing of hotels (Hsu, 2012). Though hotel owners expected that dissemination of product information, promotion sales and attraction of customers could be achieved via their website which serves as an effective marketing tool (Buhalis, 2003), unfortunately, the results of the latest studies proved the opposite. Usually, customers will have trust in terms of what other users created or UGC that is more than what the departments such as the marketing department or agencies tend to create (Kardon, 2007).

Social media has turned out to be the effective and influential channel that produces information (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007). Lanz, Fischhof and Lee (2010) had noted that most successful hotels are seeking more innovative ways in having together the social media and the marketing techniques which has been used traditionally before in order for them to lead the present race. Many hotels use social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter to promote their products (Ettestad, 2008). In addition, Stelzner (2012) have identified that Facebook and Twitter were the top two social media tools used by marketers. While in the hotel industry, about seventy-five percent of hotels have used social media for marketing purposes (Hotelmarketing.com, 2011).

Social media has drove tourism industry to communicate with their customers in new ways. Establishing virtual communities is a strategy used by hotels to attract potential, and connect existing customers online (O'Connor, 2008; Pan et al., 2007). Hotels industry can also feed the information gathered from social media to their product

development and quality control processes to reflect customer and business value (Sigala, 2008). Many researchers argued that online user reviews have a persuasive impact on online sales of hotels (e.g., Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye, Law, Gu & Chen, 2011), and several studies have also put the effort in trying to have the access of the common roles of Facebook application together as the means in social media which bring out the best in complying the demands as well as supplies in the e-tourism market and it has also been denoted that this platforms has been merely important in the industry (Milano et al., 2011; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Thus, it is apparently crucial for the people such as the operators and hoteliers to actually possess a good online presence in the social medias available especially Facebook application (Hsu, 2012; Leung et al., 2015; Sigala et al., 2012). With this importance of social media tools for the hotel industry, yet there are very few studies which analyzed social media adoption among hotels industry. However, the evidence shows that, the previous studies about the adoption of social media tools on organizations are quite limited in Malaysia (Parveen et al., 2015). Therefore, these arguments and more evidences motivated the researcher to concentrate on this area.

2.8 Tourism in Malaysia

Tourism refers to the travelling practices for recreation, leisure as well as for the purpose of business by which the journey and the places that are chosen are outside of the usual environment and the nature of travelling are merely temporary (Cooper, 2008). According to United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014) Asia and Pacific have the very best moment in contributing to the world tourism growth, whereby both regions cumulatively have contributed more than 8% growth to the world market. Within the region, South Asia and South-East Asia has been

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recorded to have more than 9% of growth. Africa recorded more than 7% growth, and followed by the America which apparently recorded more than 5% and Europe which recorded more than 4% growth.

Tourism in Malaysia experienced a rapid growth in the 1990s (Chon, Elgin & Oppermann, 1997). Since then, tourism has been developed to become the second largest foreign exchange earner behind manufacturing and catalyst to the economic growth (Hanafiah & Harun, 2010; Mosbah & Al Khuja, 2014). Mosbah and Al Khuja (2014) stated that Malaysia is one of the most popular tourism destination globally. Furthermore, tourism is not only significant for the country's economic growth but it also plays a significant role in terms of social development, fostering national integration and the unity of multi-ethnic societies in Malaysia (Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism, 1992). In addition, Lahap, O'Mahony and Dalrymple (2014) stated that, the tourism industry has been hosting large numbers of tourists arriving for business or vacation purposes as well as transient passengers' end-route to other destinations. Back in 2013, MYR 65.44 billion (US$ 20 billion) have been contributed by the tourism sector towards Malaysis's GDP and therefore being ranked second following the manufacturing sector apparently on the economic contributions (Tourism Malaysia, 2012). The idea of intense competition has becoming a feature that is highlighted by the tourism industry for quite some time and this also has contributed towards developing sophisticated business operation strategies (Lahap et al., 2014).

Hospitality industry at large struggle in volatile business environments characterized by technological advancement, intense competition, economic structure, changing

social taste and uncertainty of climate change (Said, Latif & Ishak, 2014). It has been reported that there are 2,503 hotels in Malaysia (MOT, 2013) and with 60 percent occupancy rate per person, the level of the competition is very enormous for the organizations that can bring changes and assist hotels to remain relevant to the market. Regarding the hotel industry in Malaysian, they achieve growth apart from the fact that, it was heavily hit by the worldwide economic recession in 2009 (Hanan & Zainal, 2012).

Malaysia hotel industry has experienced and encouraging growth lately and Malaysia is establishing itself as the major centre for international air travel in the region. Additionally, with the government of Malaysia promoting tourism through every possible media both locally and overseas, the country has been able to attract over six million people from overseas such as holiday makers and businessmen to Malaysia every year (Ahmed, 2014 accourding to Regit, 2013).

ICT has been widely practiced in the tourism industry and apparently, the tourists will tend to take it for granted as they believed that they can certainly utilize the use of internet in almost all agendas for their arrangements to travel even when they are travelling to places that are of developing countries around the world (Grunfeld, Mao, de Lacy & Houghton, 2012). The emergence of social media tools has impacted the tourism industry as well as the individuals. Bradbury (2011) stated that the importance of social media in the tourism sector has increased, especially tourism promotion. Of late, travellers are passionate to share experince about their travels and vacation on the social media platform. In reference to the literature, it has been stated that social media is beneficial in assisting the customers in the travel planning as well as to produce

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informed decisions for the purpose of deciding the dearinations, accomodation, restaurants, tours and also to find out certain attractions a place provided so that it can be one of the destinations chosen for any upcoming trip (Popesku, 2014; Ruzic & Bilos, 2010; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Moreover, Kim et al. (2013) and Michaelidou et al. (2011) pointed out that, social media can be used in order to get connected with current and potential customers and apart from that; organizations may also used social media as the mean of communication in staying connected with the members of the industry and organization. In line with this arguments, prior studies acknowledged that, when an organization is able to successfully make full use of the benefits of social media, these organizations were able to perform more effectively and better against their competitors (Ainin et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2015; Wong, 2012). However, Hotels owners are still not clear on how to take full advantages of this platform in order to utilize its full potential (Manap & Adzharudin, 2013). Therefore, most of the Malaysian organizations seeks to created a social media presence for their organizations (Parveen, Jaafar & Ainin, 2015).

2.9 Previous Studies on Hotels and Social Media

There are a lot of researches conducted in field of hotel industries and social media

Table 2.2 summarizes the previous studies that focuses on this topic.

Table 2.2

Summary previous studies in hotels and social media

Author	Focus/ aim	Research Method	Outcome
Leung, Lee and Law (2012).	The adoption of Web 2.0 examined technologies on chain and independent hotel websites in Hong Kong hotels	qualitative interview	The results highlight that, the top management plays the important role in web 2.0 adoptions and also hotel managers need to provide their top management with adequate information about how Web 2.0 can help improve their business and competitive advantage.
Buted, Gillespie, Conti, Delgado, Marasigan, Rubico and Felicen, (2014).	Examine social media effects in tourism industry of Batangas region.	Quantitative	Results showed that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Websites were the social networking site frequently used by individuals and hospitality industry. social media tools served as an instrument to information disseminated quickly particularly for the tourism industries with the cost of less
Chung and Koo, (2015).	Examines the travel information searches using social media as a new search behavior from a value perspective.	Quantitative	The findings revealed that the traveler's perception of the value of social media is a primary determinant of the traveler's social media usage.
Ab Hamid, Razak, Akhir, and Cheng (2013).	Examine the relationships between the use of social media, trust and customer retention	Quantitative	Results indicated there are positive correlations between the, use of social media, trust and customer retention.
Virginia Phelan, Chen and Haney (2013).	Used Facebook as a marketing tool and examine on how consumers are interacting with the property by customer comments, measuring the number of fans, and accuracy of information provided.	Qualitative Content analysis	The result of this study clarifies that adoption of Facebook features varies widely from hotel to hotel. Some hotels utilize Facebook solely as a means for posting property information, whereas others focus on facilitating customer engagement.

Minazzi and Lagrosen (2013).	Investigate the use of social media among European hotels.	Quantitative and qualitative	The results show that European hotels are still in the first stages of developing social media strategies that present a moderate level of integration among different media.

Table 2.2 concludes almost all of the prior studies concentrated on the uitilization, adoption, along with the trust of social media tools in hotels industry. In contrst, there is lack of attention from previous researchers on the social media benchmark in hotel industry particularly, in Malaysisa. The social media benchmark is measuring the use of social media among organization to understand how high the social media is utilized in the hotel businesse. According to Kaplan and Norton (1996), the concept should measure all aspects of the performance that are relevant to the success of the organization. Often, social media is seen as a method that is used to strenghthen the brand of the company (Lagrosen & Josefsson, 2011) and therefore, it is logical that hotels that concentrate more on their brands should be ready to adopt social media. Therefore, focus on social media measurement has increasingly becoming more important to the professionals. Basically, the result of measure of the social media will assist to improve the business performance. Moreover, this study will dig out whether there is a paucity of studies measuring the social media in hotels sector, especially in Malaysia. This also encourages the researcher to concentrate fully in this area.

2.10 Social Media Analytics

Regardless of the vast potential to reach global audience, many organizations are contending to answer on their organization's performance in social media space (Ramanathan & Dreiling, 2013). To explain social media performance, most of the authors used the term "Social media analytics" (Ambler, 2011; Leskovec, 2011; Lovett, 2011). Definition by Lovett (2011, p. 126) stated that social media analytic is *"the discipline that helps companies measure, assess, and explain the performance of social media initiatives in the context of specific business objectives"*. Social Marketing Analytics alludes to the field that helps enterprises to evaluate, measure, and clarify the execution of online networking activities in connection to particular business objectives (Lovett & Owyang, 2010). Social media analytics is an incipient and rising train that can help organizations define and actualize measurement methods for getting experiences from social media communications and also for the purpose of assessing the achievement of their own social networking initiative; at last, an effective social media analytics project can empower organizations to enhance their execution management activities across different business functions (Ruhi, 2014). Social media analytics adds to the current difficulties of needing to manage various platforms, gigantic quantity of data generated by users, with multiple languages, different dialects, and different sorts of contents and is well-timed in terms of the analytics (Ramanathan & Dreiling, 2013).

Metrics and analytics are fairly interchangeable words both indicating measurement and most studies referred the measurement as metrics (Poston, 2012). Basically, social media analytics includes the definition and also the adoption of the right and suitable metrics to measure the success and effectivity of the social media initiatives within

specific organizations. At its essence, social media analytics embodies the act of characterizing and embracing the right measurements (metrics) in measuring the achievement of social media activities in organization. In the analytics, it draws and analyzes the measurements to create experiences and advise future strategy. Consequently, in section 2.12, the researcher concentrated on the previous studies which analyzed the social media with metrics.

2.11 Elements of the Facebook Page

Facebook platform has been launched in February 2004 at Harvard University as a local networking application and it rapidly deploy to other United states colleges (Mazman,& Usluel, 2010). Facebook platform authorized users to create profiles describing themselves simply by constructing their profiles with pictures, creating photo albums, adding their life events and even sharing their likes and dislikes (Jala, Sistla & Mathews, 2016). Also, it enables the users to make relationships with other people, which the system described as friends (Lampe, Ellison & Steinfield, 2007). In fact, users spend a lot of time considering what to post on Facebook (Sørensen, 2016). Figure 2.2 portrays the Facebook elements that are focused in this empirical study.

More precisely, the wall is the primary space on the profile where the user or friends can post comments or add pictures, music, or video clips. The "News Feed" is the main section of a user's homepage, which updates the user activities of his or her Facebook friends. It also offers an internal e-mail system for sending private messages to Facebook friends. In addition, the pages for businesses and organizations allow the audience to become Fans (Likes of page) of a business or organization and interact in the same way as they interact with other user profiles. The Facebook platform Insights

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tool includes data on Fans' engagement with posts from the page. The page administrators are able to see how many comments Fans make on the posts and track how many Facebook users start and stop viewing the posts in News Feed.

Facebook is considered by the companies as the most attractive social media platform to be used for marketing, in particular for business to customer businesses (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Business and small companies use Facebook in advertising because it is cheaper than traditional media such as non-virtual media, and by using Facebook, it can also boost the viral messages (WOM) generated by advertisers through the customers (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Facebook in the tourism sector is considered as a prime reference tool, where it is being used by the customers in various travel activities (Bulencea & Egger, 2013; Fotis, Buhalis & Rossides, 2012). In the context of the Facebook page of brand, the follower/ likes of page can interact with the firm (Hotel) through: (1) posting contents on the page, (2) commenting on the posts by the hotel, (3) liking on the posts which indicated interest with the post, (4) sharing the interesting post. Basically, these activities embody a shape of WOM communication. Facebook platform enable the hotels to have two-way communication with customers (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). With a broad perspective, Facebook through its two-way interactivity, provide a platform for hotels to have ongoing, real-time, dialogue with existing and potential customers, thus encouraging long-term relationships. The usage of Facebook to interact with customers has also become more significant by hotels; to assist hotels in identifying opportunities to improve services in a way that it is engaging and meaningful for customers.

Figure 2.2 Example of a Facebook Timeline page (screenshot date: 28/10/2015)

Basically, the header consists of two pictures i.e. the larger cover photo and the profile

picture (Podobnik, Ackermann, Grubisic & Lovrek, 2012). The hotel's cover photo is

symbolizing the hotel image and brand because it is the first thing the user or customer

is seeing when they visit the hotel page on Facebook. The hotel logo is a small image

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appeared throughout the page. The content which has been earlier published will be available in the archives as well as the right side column on the page. Meanwhile, the left side column consists of the information about the page (for example: hotel page and location) (Podobnik, 2013). Furthermore, one can note that the page currently has 20,478 likes of page (followers). Lastly, the most crucial section is actually the right column by which the messages and the multimedia file might as well be posted. Therefore, the information on the page can be entered in the information section which can display the photos and videos shared by the page. A user can like specific hotel page on Facebook and by clicking on the "Like" button of that hotel. The administrators of Facebook page have the ability to post contents on the page. These contents are not visible on the hotel page only, but it also can appear available on the Facebook page wall for those who liked the Facebook page of the hotel. Apparently, posts can be in forms of text, image, video, etc. Recently, there is no need for customers to visit the Facebook page of the hotel to find the news, promotions and other information linked with the hotel they like as the posts come to customers in real-time.

2.12 Previous Studies of Social Media Metrics

There are many researchers who came up with the definitions of metric such as Farris, Bendle, Pfeifer, and Reibstein (2006) and Peters, Chen, Kaplan, Ognibeni and Pauwels (2013) where a metric is defined as a measuring system that quantifies a trend, dynamic, or characteristic. In addition, social media metrics in the business section consider the quantify interactions between the brands and their customers (Lovett, 2011). A metric refers to any single variable that is being measured (e.g., number of posts, tweets, fans, and so forth) (Sterne, 2010). Measurements are utilized to (1) create baselines for communication goals; and (2) accomplish every goal through follow

progress. Since the choice of measurements is the capacity of the objectives, we should first recognize an arrangement of potential social media goals before examining social media measurements (Barger & Labrecque, 2013).

With all the arguments mentioned above, there is dearth of the previous literature which focused on how the companies used social media in general and hotels sector in particular. According to DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013), using social media in companies is not enough, and this has also been agreed by Culnan, McHugh and Zubillaga (2010) who said that by merely creating a space on a social media site does not create value. Hence, in reference to Kitchen et al. (2008), metrics are the key to create and assess the incorporated marketing communication programs and the hotels must use social media in a strategic way to take advantage of their potential. Besides that, Wang and Chen (2014) confirmed that failure to properly embrace social media channels may deny the opportunities of reaching the specific customer and also contributing to the loss of revenue for the hotel.

Utilizing the social media to be used as travel planning has been a high and rapid growth which has also been observed from the few recent years. Social media is believed to have more interactive features if to be compared to other means of communications. Several previous studies concentrated on social media marketing in general. Whereas, in this section, the researcher strives to shed light of the more popular studies in the social media metrics which measured the customer's engagement. Table 2.3 below illustrates some metrics used in the literature to measure the engagement of the customers in the social media:

Table 2.3

Previous studies of social media metrics for measure the engagement

Authors	Metrics engagement (Facebook)	Indicators engagement	Domain
O'Connor (2011)	Number of Likes; Number of Comments.	Engagement	Hotel/ Europe
Thackeray, Neiger, Smith, and Van Wagenen, (2012)	Engagement rate = likes + comments/ number of page fans	Engagement	Health
Barger and Labrecque (2013)	The number of comments on, replies to, likes of , and shares of a given post	Engagement (per post)	Conceptual study
	$\dfrac{\text{engagement at time t with all posts to date}}{\text{Number of followers at time t}} * 100$	Engagement (overall %)	
	The number of social media participants who write positive post about a brand during a specified period of time.	Advocates	
Neiger et al. (2012)	Ratings Likes on Facebook posts Like rates Frequency of favorites	Low engagement	Health/ Conceptual study
	Likes or dislikes on videos Posts or tweets by users User-generated content (e.g., videos) Comments on posts Comment rate Number of threads on discussion topics Frequency of new discussions, new topics Downloads Uploads Klout scores (see Klout.com) Number of retweets Retweet rate Mentions The frequency of sharing a post a post, video, or link.	Medium engagement	
	Number of people who register for services/make an appointment Number of people who partake in off-line promotional events as volunteers or sponsors Number of people who are present at off-line events as participants Number of people that got help Number of participants who are satisfied	high engagement	
DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013)	The number of people who "like" each firm on Facebook	Stakeholder willingness to engage	Fortune's Most Admired U.S. companies
	This comprise of the peoples request from the company and the company response	Dialogic loop	

Virginia Phelan, Chen and Haney (2013)	Number of Facebook fans Number of people talking about the property Number of people who "checked in" at the property Customer posted feedback/comments/inquiries (0,1) Property replied to customer posted feedback/ comments/ inquiries (0,1)	Interaction	Hotel/ USA
Minazzi and Lagrosen (2013)	number of "likes" fans, number of people "talking about this" and number of people that "were here"	Performance	Hotel/ Europe

The first study was carried out by O'Connor (2011) where he measured the hotel performance in the social media depending on the number of likes and number of comments. The second study was by Thackeray et al. (2012) by which it has been referred that the social media has enhanced communication between individuals and organizations. Thackeray et al.'s study is more similar with O'Connor, where their study depended mainly on the number of likes and number of comments divided in number of fans to measure the consumer's engagement. These two studies inattention another important metric such as number of sharing post as Barger and Labrecque (2013) referred to.

Meanwhile, DiStaso and McCorkindale (2013) sought to measure stakeholders' willingness to engage depending on the number of people who "like" and communicate with firm through social media. Based on the literature, all the social media features are important to engage the customers for the companies or organizations. Likewise, in Minazzi and Lagrosen (2013), they focused on the number of "likes", number of people "talking about this" and number of people that "were here" to measure the performance of hotel in Europe. Another study conducted by Virginia Phelan, Chen and Haney (2013) is about the social media tools as the effective

marketing tool in the hospitality field. Their study focused mainly on the "like" and "check-in" features in the Facebook. Whilst, based on the e-Marketer (2012), it has been claimed that; when there is a failure in responding towards the comments by the customers, it might result in the development of negativity in terms of the image as well as the how people feel about the company. Likewise, Chan and Guillet (2011) asserted that; when there are lack of interactions between hotels and customers, it will be prevalent and thus might then cause the customers in choosing other hotels due to the negativity they encountered with the previous one. Thus, this study will concentrate on the comments as a basis to measure the performance of hotels and customers' engagement.

Neiger et al. (2012) divided the customers' engagement into three levels: the first level includes "likes", the second level involves the "comments" and "sharing the information" while the third level, the researchers concentrates on the offline events such as the number of the people who register for service. The social media also offers a new feature where they can also check-in to places using their smartphones. The previous studies referred to the importance of the social media features to engage the customers and therefore to enhance the performance of the firm or hotels, the researchers must utilize all the social media features. Barger and Labrecque (2013) studied the engagement in the marketing field. In their study, they focus on the likes, comments and share of the social media features. But unfortunately, this study is just a conceptual paper, and is also not concentrating on the rest of the social media features such as "check-in".

To sum up, most of the previous studies did not fully consider all features of the social media to enhance the engagement. In this study, the researcher will try to present the benchmark to measure the engagement more specifically.

2.13 Social Media Engagement

There are different definitions of the engagement concept which have been published in previous studies. The overarching definition by Hollebeek (2011, p. 565) explained that *"the level of a customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions"* and Verhoef, Reinartz, and Krafft (2010, p. 247) defined it within only one perspective that is "*a behavioral manifestation toward the brand or firm that goes beyond transactions"*. Basically, the engagement of the customer is seen as a factor that is very strategic to help in forming as well as maintaining a competitive advantage besides allowing people to get involve in the business development (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). Social media has actually brought the people's interaction with each other as well as their interactions with the company (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).

Online customers' engagement became very significant for firms that are struggling to build their brand and it is one of most important the factors in creating a competitive advantage (Zailskaite-Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012). Social media is an important topic in the world of business due to its prevalent universally. Tracy (2014) mentioned that most of companies will use social media and a lot of companies have realized that best way to reach out to customers is social media. DeMers (2014) affirmed that social media tools can assist firms in many aspects such as increasing the engagement with customers and brand building. Marketing practitioners are among the groups which

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have the interest in the utilization of online social media as it has emerged quickly and widely as a very beneficial tool that is aligned with their efforts to inculcate the customers' engagement with the company or any products marketed (WARC, 2012).

Social media engagement defined by Paine (2011) refers to users' behaviors that exceeded simple actions (e.g. reading or viewing). These actions could involve commenting, liking and sharing a post (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). For example, Hoffman and Fodor (2010) proposed a three step framework in evaluating the success of social media activities of companies. The first step measures consumers' awareness of social media efforts (e.g., number of fans, members) while the second calculates their level of engagement based on the number of likes and comments on posts received by users. The third stage refers to the word-of-mouth solicitation on behalf of the consumers (e.g., post shares).

Hotel managers should engage in social media in order to establish communication with the customers (Inversini & Masiero, 2014). Hotels have realized that in order to increase the hotel room sales, they need to sell the room online since it is more convenient for customers to purchase via the internet (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Customers' engagement is the new key element for the success of social media marketing campaigns. Meanwhile, Aral, Dellarocas and Godes (2013) called for more research on how organizations can successfully interact with social media platforms, which social media strategies companies should pursue, and how to measure outcomes of social media for companies.

2.14 Adopted Social Engagement Benchmark

Based on the previous study discussed earlier concerning the social media with marketing, this study proposed a benchmark for measuring how the hotels in Malaysia are using social media as an engagement tool effectively. This measurement model strives to evaluate the level of customers' engagement and is applied to the Facebook accounts used by hotels in Malaysia. This model encompasses multi- dimensions where the first dimension is Awareness, the second is Attitude Expression followed by the Voicing Opinion, Advocacy and then Loyalty. Figure 2.3 explains the different dimensions of the proposed measurement benchmark:

Dimension	Definition	Metrics
Awareness	Measures the realization of Facebook page by consumers.	Number of Page likes
Attitude expressio	Measures of consumers' acceptance regarding to content posted on the Facebook page.	Number of post likes.
Voicing opinion	Measures of consumers feedback regarding to content posted on the Facebook page.	Number of post
Advocacy	Measures the consumers word-of-mouth activities or spread of content posted.	Number of post shared.
Loyalty	Measures the number of consumers' offline with the hotel.	Number of check in by

Figure 2.3 Different dimensions of proposed benchmark for the measurement of social media engagement

This benchmark is highlighted in order to understand how the hotels in Malaysia utilize the social media (such as Facebook) to enhance the customers' engagement. In the section below, this study discusses the dimensions in detail.

The first dimension of this model will evaluate the customers' awareness of the Facebook pages used by hotel industry. Specifically, the first stage of the measurement model evaluates citizens' awareness of the Facebook pages used by the hotel (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). By this way, an estimate of the visibility and popularity of hotel's Facebook account across the community is provided. This dimension will be measured by the number of Likes on the Facebook page of the hotels where the number of the likes represented the customers' willing to engage. Previously called "Fan" was renamed by Facebook in 2010 "Like" which apparently aiming to simplify and standardize the choices which people have when dealing with social networking sites. Nonetheless, the calculations appeared to be similar and specifically, the word fan has been continuously utilized by Facebook and companies in order to create continuous effects. This means that, it is specifically the number of people who happen to click the "like" button for certain Facebook page (Minazzi, 2015). After that, the customers become aware and get connected with the Facebook page and they then started evaluating the online content posted.

The second dimension of the model strives to evaluate customers' attitude of posts by hotels. A positive evaluation will result in pressing the "Like" button. This action is a low form of engagement with the Facebook page where customers simply express their attitude and show their favorability towards the page content (this has been agreed by Barger & Labrecque, 2013). Neiger et al. (2012) referred "like" as low engagement

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which is present when end-users are merely acknowledging a preference or agreement of the contents.

The third dimension of model seeks to highlight the customers' voicing opinion statement of one's opinion with respect to a post which involves actions such as commenting on a post or replying to a comment (this has also been referred by Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Barger & Labrecque, 2013). Attitude formation and subsequent expression of opinion is a first sign of involvement with the Facebook activity of hotel which could result in more active forms of engagement (Barger & Labrecque, 2013). However, some authors agreed that comments or "likes" provide substantial evidence of engagement with users (Gerolimos, 2011; Glazer, 2012).

The fourth dimension can be observed when customers become deeply engaged with the Facebook page of hotels as they can become passionate supporters of the content posted. When citizens become deeply engaged with the Facebook page of hotel, they can become passionate supporters of the content posted. Hence, customers act as advocates who spread the content created by hotels by sharing and forwarding the posts shared.

Regarding the fifth dimension, Neiger et al. (2012) mentioned that the high dimension of the engagement can also be measured by the number of people who visit the hotel offline, while this feature can be measured through the number of people who click on the "check-in" button which actually can be considered as word of mouth for hotels (Minazzi & Lagrosen, 2013). This new feature *"check-in"* allows a person to share where they were, and also specify the locations visited (Cohen, 2012). Indeed, the tracking of "like" and "check-in" features on social media has been recognized as an

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effective way of fostering long-term relationships with customers (eMarketer, 2012). Furthermore, this could be an indicator of customers' loyalty (Minazzi & Lagrosen, 2013).

2.15 Summary of the Chapter Two

The literature review is very important to highlight the most related work within the field of research and the concepts that are relevant to the phenomena. Besides that, this chapter also had explained in detail on the previous studies related to the benchmark (Metrics) for the social media in general and in hotels industries. The evidences had shown that there are very few studies which measure or analyze the social media engagement between the hotel and customers in the world especially in Malaysia. Thus, this actually has motivated the researcher to focus on this field to gain more new knowledge from the literature as well as from the same vein of hotels industries basically in utilizing it after benefited from the outcome the results in order to improve their performance and the competitions with other businesses.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter elaborates the research design and method in achieving the objectives stated in Chapter one. It describes the relevant constituents of the research plan including population, data sampling and collection, and results and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The research design of this study requires an adoption and implementation of appropriate strategies to explain the answers of the research questions stated in Chapter one (Kumar, 2010). Research design refers to an outline designed to carry out activities involving investigation of factors and validity of research results (Mitchell & Jolley, 2012). An appropriate research design is important for justifying the data type, data collection, sampling methods, schedule, and budget determination (Hair, Babin, Money & Samouel, 2003). Thus, research design plays a significant role in planning and executing activities in this study. Accordingly, the framework in Figure 3.1 has been decided, adopted from Creswell (2009) and Kothari (2004). Each stage is explained in detail in subsequent sections.
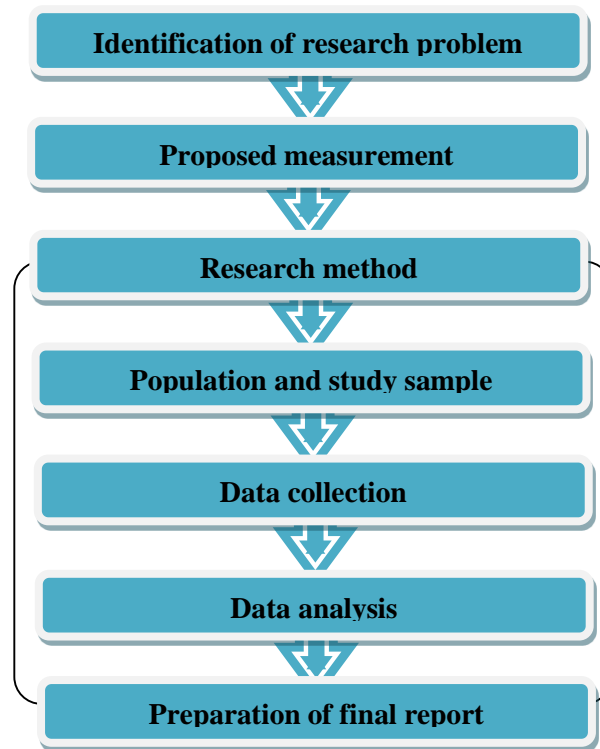
Figure 3.1 Research Framework

The following sub-sections describe the steps taken for each of the stages within the proposed framework.

3.3 Identification of Research Problem

The research framework is initiated by identifying the research problem, which was based on the previous studies. Having studied the previous works, this study discovers that only limited studies have determined the social media benchmark in measuring social media engagement between hotel industry and its customers to utilize the social media tools across the world and more particularly in Malaysia. This study also relies on secondary sources such as research articles, conference papers, reports, and books in the formation of the current research problem.

3.4 Benchmark for Measuring Social Media Engagement

In this phase, this study highlights the existing social media metrics based on several the previous studies in different disciplines. The proposed benchmark involves five dimensions, which are detailed in Section 2.14.

3.5 Research Method

This study applies both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Particularly, statistical analyses are used for analyzing numerical data (Hossein, 2007). Meanwhile, the qualitative approach is used in dealing with data gathered through interviews (Veal, 1997) to further understand the way hotels use Facebook to engage with their customers. Regarding that, Chisaka and Vakalisa (2000) express that qualitative approach is the best because it provides in-depth information rather than breadth. It is a method of learning and knowing about various experiences from the point of view of participants. Besides, Burns and Grove (2003) and Speziale and Carpenter (2003) propose that qualitative approach allows scholars to examine a social phenomenon and its meaning in daily life. Accordingly, Kawamura (2011, p. 111) mentioned, *"if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach"*. Moreover, "*if the purpose is to understand an area where little is known or where previously offered understanding appears inadequate, you need qualitative method that will help you see the subject anew and will offer surprises*" (Richard & Morse, 2013).

On the other hand, quantitative approach is also applied to offer an entire understanding on the level of engagement between hotels and customers on social media, which involves content analysis (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Grunig, 2009; Smith

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et al., 2012). It has been extensively used by scholars who study communication content and channels (such as websites, advertising, and media stories) (Roznowski, 2003; Yun et al., 2008). The content analysis is suitable because it provides an objective and systematic way for comparing the content of large sample of content types (Luarn, Lin & Chiu, 2015). It was originally defined by Berelson in 1952 as *"a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication"* (as cited in Stempel & Westley, 1989, p. 125). In the similar vein, Krippendorff (2012, p. 18) said *"Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use"*. Currently, online technology is bringing together an integrated model of content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002).

Meanwhile, the quantitative content analysis was used in measuring the frequencies and interpretive statistics based on particular benchmark. Content analysis features are the ability to consistently code across fragmented communication and different communication media like text, photos and videos while including them within the unit of the data (Gardner, 2012). It can statistically code individuals or organizations and cut the identity from the communication, thus protecting participants' identity. Based on the previous studies (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; McCorkindale, 2010; Waters, 2011), content analysis appears to be the best selection to analyze the findings of how hotels use and communicate through social media tools.

3.5.1 Population and Sample

A research population is generally a large collection of objects or individuals that the research wants to analyze in order to get the output (Sekaran & Roger, 2010). It complements Creswell (2009), who defines population as a set of individuals with one or more characteristic traits in common. Meanwhile, sampling is process of selecting some individuals or objects from the population through certain techniques. The aim of sampling is to get a sample that correctly reflects the population it is designed to represent (Nokhal, 2013).

This study focuses on 5-star hotels in Malaysia. It is because big hotels have expertise and resources to use their websites to create and promote their relationship with customers than small hotels (Essawy, 2005). Also, they have sufficient expertise, financial resources, and technical ability to manage social media in a professional manner (O'Connor, 2011). According to Malaysia Association of Hotel (MAH), the oldest hotel association in Malaysia (founded in 1975), the total number of 5-star hotels in Malaysia is 95 (MAH, 2015). The main reason for selecting MAH listing is because the association provides details about hotels such as hotel location, postal address, e-mail addresses, and telephone numbers. Additionally, its website displays hotels based on their star categories (1 to 5), as mentioned also by Kasimu, Zaiton and Hassan (2012).

From the total, this study selects only 40 hotels from the MAH listing. It is sufficient enough. Previously, Minazzi and Lagrosen (2013), used only fifteen hotels to analyze the social media tool. Meanwhile, Podobnik (2013) analyzed only ten companies. With

the 40 hotels, this study is able to make meaningful statistical interpretation (Bailey, 1987).

Random sampling technique (systematic) was used to select the sample. The systematic sampling technique includes defining the number of elements n of the population with the randomly selected the elements between 1 and n (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Further, Creswell (2012) outlines that in systematic sampling, every n^{th} individual or site in the population can be chosen until the desired sample size is reached. This means each individual in the population has an equal probability of being chosen, ensuring that the sample is representative of the population (Keppel, 1991). In fact, it is considered as the preferable technique of choosing a sample because it guarantees the law of *"Statistical Regularity which states that if on an average the sample chosen is a random one, the sample will have the same composition and characteristics as the universe"* (Kothari, 2004, p. 60). Accordingly, this study generates the sample using a simple computer programme, using Ms Excell.

On the other hand, qualitative approach is used to develop an in-depth exploration of a certain phenomenon (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Maxwell, 2013). Therefore, this study used convenience sampling to select the sample, particularly those who are ready to provide desired data (Sekaran & Roger, 2010; Creswell, 2012). Accordingly, five hotels were selected. According to Creswell (2009), a study might examine a single individual or site because the number of a sample could range from one or two to thirty. It also meets the recommendation by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), that a sample of five or six is sufficient to gather additional

supporting data. Each selected hotel was contacted through email, together with a cover letter.

3.5.2 Data Collection

There are different methods to collect data such as observation, interview, questionnaires, and content analysis (Kothari, 2004). This study used interview as well as content analysis techniques to collect data. In the interview, participants' perspectives and experiences about a certain topic were gathered (Turner, 2010). Open-ended questions were used as recommended by Roulston (2010) because it allows the participants to give their best expressions on their experience (Creswell, 2009). This method enables this study to identify the issues from the participants' perspective and better understand from the behavior of the participants (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2010). Questions were addressed in semi-structured manner (Fisher, 2007; Saunders et al., 2009; Wilson, 2010) because it allows this study to uncover hidden issues while exploring underlying motives and attitudes towards sensitive issues (Saleh, 2006).

In ensuring smooth execution, this study made prior arrangement with the participants. Questions were drafted based on those extracted from the literatures, such as from Hays, Page and Buhalis (2013) and Inversini and Sykes (2013) (available in Appendix A). Through the interview session, the researcher strives to understand how hotels use Facebook platform to engage with their customers, and elicit the key metrics used to measure the engagement between the hotel and customers.

As for content analysis, this study utilized hotels' Facebook pages for collecting data regarding their activities. Data from Facebook activities were collected over six

months (Dec, 2014 to Feb, 2105; June-to-Aug, 2015), because the summer for northern Hemisphere is from June to Aug and the summer for southern Hemisphere is from December to February. During this period people go out for vacation, which witnessing an increase number of tourists in Malaysia. The period of six months is more than enough because 21 days is already sufficient for monitoring the social media activities (Gardner, 2012). The total number of page likes (Fans), number of posts, number of likes on posts, number of comments on posts, number of shares on posts and number of check-in of page are the dimensions analyzed, as outlined in Section 2.14.

The data were captured using SnagIt software. It is a screen-capture software that can capture long web pages and convert them into PDF documents. This process ensures archiving of data in order to be compatible with the date of the capture, since social media tools are fluid. The coding for content analysis was adapted from the literatures such as Hays et al. (2013), which are available in Appendix B.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis, which transforms data into meaningful representations, is dependent on the type of collected data. In qualitative part, after data were collected through the interview (by recording the interview with participants), they were transcribed. It includes interpreting them from a tongue language into a written language (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Technically, after accomplishing interviews with participants, all voice data were translated into text data, for the purposes of handling. In other words, each audio data was written literally.

The process involves categorization, coding, tabulating raw data, and representing them into meaningful representations (Creswell, 2007; 2012; 2013; Dey, 1993). Coding operation was done by transforming data into symbols that can be counted and tabulated (Kothari, 2004). Everything was done manually because the amount of data was not too burdening (less than 500 pages) (Creswell, 2009). The transcriptions were read more than three times, the key words that are similar among the participants were identified, as recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2006). It is important to find similarities among all participants. Having the key words noted, the identification of concepts began.

In content analysis part, this study sought to find out how different 5-star hotels in Malaysia make use of opportunities offered by Facebook. The analysis criteria are based on the identified benchmark mentioned in the Chapter 2. It involved official Facebook pages of 40 5-star hotels in Malaysia. Previously, Wright and Hinson (2010) found out that social media practitioners perceive social media as a significant communication channel.

3.5.3.1 Assessment the engagement

The customers' engagement on Facebook pages is measured based on five dimensions (Awareness, Attitude expression, Voicing opinion, Advocacy and loyalty). More specifically, the number of likes, comments, shares and check-in were collected from each selected hotel, as has been exploited by the previous studies such as, Bonsón and Ratkai (2013), Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai (2014) and Bonsón, Ratkai, and Royo (2016). Indeed, most of the previous studies that dealt with social media have not

mentioned the technique to measure users' engagement. Therefore, this study adopts the technique used by Bonsón et al. (2013).

The formula that follows this paragraph explains the way for measuring the engagement for each dimension. Since five metrics (likes of page, likes of post, comments, shares and check-in) vary and are independent in terms of audience size, therefore they appear to be the higher percentage of representative specially to measure engagement. Meanwhile, the first dimension has been deemed as the start of the engagement.

Engagement index

$$= \frac{\text{Number of Likes per post}}{\text{Number of page likes}} * 1000 + \frac{\text{Number of comments per post}}{\text{Number of page likes}} \quad (3.1)$$

$$+ \frac{\text{Number of shares per post}}{\text{Number of page likes}} * 1000 + \frac{\text{Number of check} - \text{in}}{\text{Number of page likes}}$$

3.5.4 Preparation of Final Report

The preparation of the final report will include the results of the research. While focusing on a simple layout, the report will follow the UUM style. The report will be written with a view to present the information in a clear and comprehensive manner while mentioning the various constraints experienced during the research.

3.6 Summary of the Chapter Three

This chapter elaborates the research methodology for achieving the objectives outlined in Chapter 1. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in this study, and explained in this chapter. All stages were ensured scientific and systematic, in which procedures are explained in detail. This is important because such explanation determines the results are free of bias. Next, the following chapter discusses the results of analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter displays the empirical results of the study after the analysis was carried out to attain the research objectives for this study in line the problem. In the first section of chapter four, it discusses the interpretive analysis through the use of hand analysis. Five participants participated in the interview session (see Table 4.1) where face-to-face interview was conducted with them. In the following section, the content analysis on Facebook pages of forty out of ninety-five 5-star hotels was conducted from December 2014 until February 2015 and from June until August 2015. The data are analysed by using MS Excel to get the results. Eventually, disclosure on how hotels are using the Facebook to engage with customers, how they are measuring the engagement with their customers on Facebook, assess the engagement between the hotel and customers, and the final findings will be debated in order to establish the study's results.

4.2 Interview

The aim of this interview was to explore the understanding of how five stars' hotels in Malaysia assess or measure their usage of Facebook. In order to get the in-depth information about how hotels used Facebook, five respondents were interviewed. All sampled hotels who agreed to participate were visited to debate the nature and clarify the aim of this research. Authorization to conduct interviews with their employee has also been approved. More details about the consent form can be seen in Appendix C. Those meeting were conducted in their premises. With a view to protect the identity

of the respondents and their hotels, this study assigned alias to each participant to use it in the processes which involves analyzing and reporting data. All interviews were recorded as this allows the interaction and careful focus on the interviews, rather than concentrating on writing down the notes. At the onset of the interviews, participants were asked on the permission to record the interview. The length of the interviews ranged from 15-20 minutes. Recorded interviews were typed and then analyzed (Hatch, 2002). Interview method is useful when a research does not know the significant variables to study (Creswell, 2009). The interview technique helps us to understand the world in a specific way (Richard & Morse, 2013) which comprised of a collection of interpretive, material practices that make the world evident (Creswell, 2013) and increases a breadth of professional and academic fields (Holliday, 2007; Richard & Morse, 2013). After reading the texts, the data was coded (also known as data categorize) as the codes were formed about the original research aim (Saunders et al., 2009) and themes which occurred in the data (Dawson, 2002).

4.2.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

This subsection elaborates on the respondents' demographic statistics where it explains the demographic information in terms of age, gender, how long they have worked, what are their positions, etc. Table 4.1 illustrates the demographic statistics of the participants.

Table 4.1

Demographic Profile of the Participants

ID	Position	Years of experience	Gender	Age	Hotel
P1	Marketing executive	8 years	Female	35	H1
P2	Online marketing executive	2 years	Female	29	H2
P3	Marketing and communication manager	3 years	Female	28	H3
P4	Senior guest service manager	3 years	Male	29	H4
P5	Management Information system MIS manager	7 years	Male	32	H3

4.2.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

As for this section, the data were analyzed based on the questions asked during the interview session. In general, five questions were asked to all respondents. The participations were all satisfied and all respondents give good cooperation by giving useful and informative information. Below is the qualitative analysis conducted on each of the question asked during the interview.

Q 1: How does your hotel use Facebook to support engagement with customers?

Since using social media is significant to increase the engagement and interaction between hotel and customers, all respondents acknowledged the importance to actively update the information provided in the page. All respondents agreed that one of the most important activities that need to be done is to update the Facebook page on a regular basis. Hotel operators should always make sure the customers were always updated with new promotions and events conducted by the hotel operators. Besides that, three out of five respondents also mentioned the need to always post picture and video related to the activities conducted by the hotels. Creating suitable content is very important to create an interactive atmosphere between customer and hotels.

"It <Facebook> is really easy and free tool for us to be able to send promotions, special packages or any news... We are very active on our Facebook page. For us it is very important not only the packages and promotions but also content about the resort, about the wild life, the nature, wildlife, the nature. To get the guest to engage to our post… we communicate, for example let's say we post a picture about the beach" P1

"...from the marketing side, you see pages which are promoting their products, and services… so it is not only about promotion actually, sometimes when we talk about social media, people not need only see your promotion, right. It is about the interaction with people. So you have to interact with the customer. We interact like for example, we not only put the promotion we also put, like <such as>, the properties surrounding… Actually is a big advertisement, so that is how we promote and reach our likes page and also to explain our promotion" P2

"We must be active on page at least 3 to 4 time in day… using the Facebook page is not only about promotions but about using it to make awareness about the <hotel name> and island Langkawi through post pictures and videos because a lot of people need to know about the island" P3

"...in terms of like <such as> communicating, sometimes they say like <such as> when we post a picture, they want to come and they say we will make our plan to come next year or we will plan to come this year or they say oh we miss this place …" P4

"We have to publishing events, festival and promotions." P5

Moreover, Figure 4.1 shows that the posts lead to interaction that occurred between the customers.
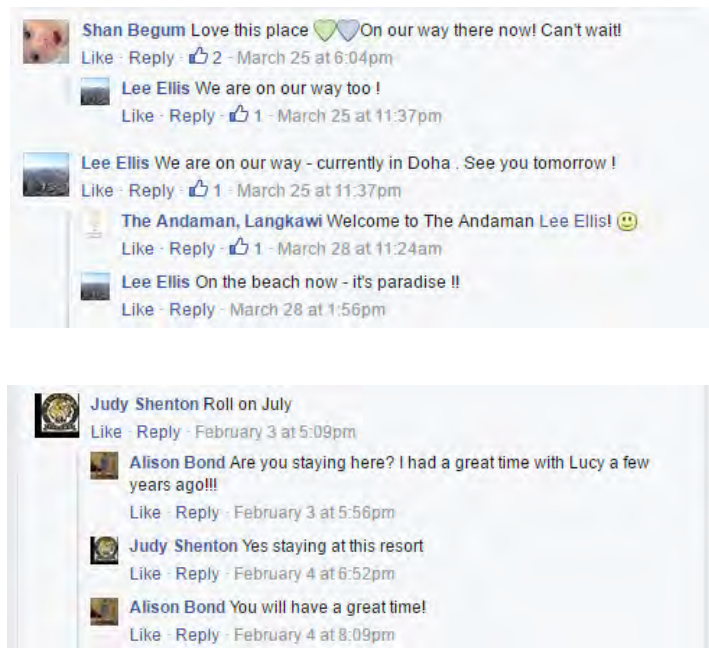
Figure 4.1 Illustrate the interactive among the customers.

Besides giving information about hotel's promotions, three out of five participants mentioned that Facebook is also used to reply on customer's queries, complaint acknowledgements and comments. Not being able to response to customers might lead to loss of customers.

> *"...we have people/ guest giving comments. So that is very important for us that each guest comment we will reply to them. If they have a question, we will reply to them immediately either using Facebook message or reply to comment. So this enable us to immediately communicate with the guest which cannot be done via email… if they see that your response is not active, they will not revisit the hotel's Facebook page…you will start losing audience"* P1

> *"Actually, Facebook has both pros and cons, if pro people know more about us, and then if you have like something bad that guest seen about your page or your properties or anything they will post that. We have guideline to fix it so, we have to contact directly with the guest by response to their post and we also will take it internally"* P2

> *"...follow up all comments and complains for guests. For example, if the guest comments about a problem, we try to reply to apologize…the interaction with customers is important for the hotel"* P5

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The Figure 4.2 clarifies that the hotels replied on the query by the customer:

Figure 4.2 Replay the customer's comments by hotels.

Q2: Who is responsible for maintaining or developing strategy campaign, using hotel Facebook page?

All the participants mentioned that there is a person who are responsible in managing the Facebook page for the hotels and most of those participants stated that the responsibility of managing the social media in general within the marketing department.

> *"For this property, it is my responsibility <online marketing executive>" P2*
> *"It is under marketing office" P3*
> *"We have a person who manage the social media, and she is available in sales office in Kuala Lumpur. She is marketing public relationship manager, and she can access to the social media tool" P4*
> *"The responsible person about the website and Facebook page is the marketing manager" P5*

Participant P1 stated that the responsibility is a common task between marketing executive and digital field executive and specifically, she said that:

> *"...under marketing executive. What I < Marketing executive > do, is I come up with the content. The job of marketing is to create the message to the audience or guests, and work together with our digital field executive… she <digital field executive> is the one who is responsible for posting them on Facebook and Instagram and twitter… If she <digital field executive> cannot post or reply, I can also do it"*
> P1

The participants indicated that the strategy and guidelines are set by different sources in hotel where participant P1 referred on the strategy prepared by the marketing office and digital field executive:

> *"we < Marketing executive and digital field executive > prepare a calendar, strategy together and she <digital field executive> is the one who is responsible for posting them on Facebook and Instagram and*

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twitter… If she <digital field executive> cannot post or reply, I can also do it" P1

Participant P2 indicated that the guidelines are set by the head office in the hotel:

"we also have our head office that makes all the guidelines that we follow" P2.

Moreover, participant P3 stated during the interview session that the support and the strategy are set by the company's main office outside Malaysia.

"we actually have support from our corporate office bases in Singapore, it is the major corporate office, so we get support from them… basically the strategy comes from them and on a local level we adapt for ourselves, and we see what is in need for the business at that point." Also add that, *"However, the outboard companies build the strategies of online marketing not necessarily achieve all the purposes of the hotels, especially when there is different characteristic between the countries"* P3

Q3: How does your hotel measure the level of customer's engagement using Facebook?

Based on the analysis, it was noted that there are two approaches used by hotel operators to measure their level of customer's engagement using Facebook – two out of five participants referred that they used analytical tools available online and observe activities that taken place on their Facebook account.

"Yes, we do. We measure the statistics and analytics using Google analytics. We analyze the statistics every week…" P1

Although, Google-analytic was used to analyze the level of engagement, their level of knowledge on how to analyze using that tool is still at infancy level.

"Although we used Google analytics but I am not very good at it and still learning on how to use it." P3

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Besides using analytical tools, two out of five participants measure the level of engagement by observing the activities that taken place within the site. Participants usually observed the number of likes, number of comments, messages posted, notifications and number of page shared.

> *"Yes, every day I check Facebook and also I actually schedule all the promotion and events… no tools, actually we can only see from the inside but not in details so I can see how famous is the post, so what is the reach of the people to the post"* P2

> *"It is not one of the highest that we measure that much, because we mostly as a hotel the first thing we will see most recent rates from other websites like adviser or booking.com. But Facebook is just an additional tool… so, yes we also observe it"* P4

Based on the analysis, there was also one participant who did not take any actions to measure their level of engagement between customers and hotels.

> *"Honestly, I don't have any idea about the measuring the level of engagement. My job is just to answer the messages and maintain the Facebook page"* P5

Besides, from the observation of their own Facebook account, four out of five participants made comparisons between their accounts with other hotel operators. This is to get some ideas whether customers are aware of their Facebook account.

> *"We compare between our Facebook and other hotels pages…"* But also she highlighted that *"we have some hotels on the island that are very strong in social media, especially in Facebook… It is all depends on the person that running the social media account. Nowadays hotels are focusing on having a position that is only for social media. Before it used to be digital marketing, but now it is social media experts and digital marketing two different positions. So here as a result we don't have the position yet"* P1

> *"Yes, actually it is comparing with other five stars hotels on the island"* P3

"Sometimes we have to look for our competitive, because we want to see what they promote for and then how they get more fans and more likes, but not always" P2

"Usually we also compare <Name of Hotel>, because our hotel is only five years old, it is still new. So, we also need to know about the other hotels, how they do it or how they engage with customers" P4

Usually, when monitoring the Facebook account, hotel operators will give attention towards the number of page likes given by the customers. This is the most important indicators that they used to demonstrate that their customer is engaging with their hotel. All participants stated that:

"As I mentioned before, we use the tool for analyzing the Facebook. But in general we focus on the number of likes of page per week, because this number represent the number of fans" P1

"We have to observe the comments first and then the number of followers or likes… actually in the Facebook itself you will also see your nearest competitive and you will see the likes" P2

"…the first thing I see is how many like increase for the day…based the increase and decrease number of the likes of page important" P3

"In fact, when I open the Facebook of the hotel, first I focus on the number of 'likes'… because we need to see how many likes we have" P4

"and also I see the update in the number of likes <number of fans>" P5

Besides the likes of page, all participants also stated another important feature which is "comments" for the hotel. For instance, they indicated that:

"the first when we go on Facebook we always look at the last post that we have … I always look at how many comments, the comments are very important, but this is not measured every day but by week… if someone comment it means that they are very interested in the post" P1

"I only observe the comments first, because sometimes we have some not good comments, sometimes maybe a customer just want to tell something wrong, so we have to observe the comments" P2

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> *"… and also focus about the last post we posting, to see how many people comments and what they said about the post. For example, if the post is promotions will see if the guests have any queries about it"* P3

> *"…also the comments increase the interaction between the guests and hotel, therefore we strive to answer all the guests' queries as we can"* P4

> *"The comments for customers sometime I observe, for instance one day I see the customer complained about the poor quality of Wi-Fi…"* P5

Indeed, the Facebook platform added new features that allow the users to locate their current location where this feature is called "check-in". Three out of five participants mentioned that they do not measure this feature but they observe it and encourage customers to click "check-in".

> *"We don't measure it, it's not like something we look at so much, but recently we encourage customers to chick-in…",* and she repeated that *"we do not measure it …we see it but without proper analysis… check-in can increase social media engagement"* P1

> *"If we see anyone that check-in, sometimes I will comment that 'you are welcome in <hotel name> hotel'…"* P2

> *"The check-in feature now is increasing, before this, there wasn't much offer thing about it, but I noticed in this last month there is more people use check-in…"* P3

One of the features in Facebook platform is "like of the post". This feature is a simple way to let hoteliers know that customers enjoyed the post. Participant P3 mentioned the importance of this indicator for their hotel as he said:

> *"Our Facebook site actually has a quite high level of engagement, because we have a lot of guests constantly comment or like our pictures"* P3

On the contrary, participant P1 referred that she did not observe this indicator which is the likes of the post that was mentioned as an important indicator in previous studies, where she said that:

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"...I don't look at likes of post, because likes does not mean that the person read your post, just go like, like, like..." P1

Finally, the number of "share", where this indicator has a low attention by the hotel operators. In fact, only participant P1 stated that they measure the share feature as she said:

"...as well as the number of share post...also important" P1

Q4: How does your hotel motivate customers to engage with your Facebook account?

The participants have various ideas about how to make the engagement with customers. Two out of five participants stated that they motivate the customers to engage with Facebook page through giving the guests some gifts or provide free services.

"For example, at the moment we are offering to every person who checks-in at the <hotel name> will get a free spa... if you post the nicest picture of the hotel ... you will win 3 days 2 nights stay. Like this encourage people to post about the resort" P1

"...for example if the guest come here and drink and also check-in maybe they get one more drink... it will encourage customer to post on Facebook and more good about us" P2

Besides giving gifts and free services, the hotel operators have to frequently update and create their own content. This is very important in order to attract customers to engage with the hotel's Facebook account. Four out of five participants stated that:

"...we have to be more friendly that we are more open, and I think the best way to engage with customer" P2

"I try not to make it too formal it has to be very at talk very personal it is almost like talking to your friend in your personal Facebook." P3

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"I think through posting the promotion and the hotel's features is very important because people every day like to go to social media instead of different sites to go, and looking for best prices and see what others said about your hotel, what differentiate the hotel about others." P4

"We should update the Facebook, status update" P5

From the analysis, hotel operators also invite popular individuals (e.g., actors, singers) to become their guests. Usually hotel will promote their positive experience as marketing strategies to engage with potential customers. Customers usually will response positively to this type of posting as mentioned by one participant:

"Recently we start using YouTube influence characters. For example we have people who are famous on YouTube but they are not Hollywood stars, we have them at the hotel for free for two night and then they have maybe 200,000 followers 300,000 followers. So they post, post, post ... and within one week we can see an increase of 100 or 200 likes for social media pages." P1

Finally, hotels also highlighted customer positive experience and used it as their promotion materials. Customers usually feel honored when hotel showcased their vacation and experience to wider audiences as stated by one participant:

"So, if they take a really nice picture we will re-post it and thank them in the picture and then they feel honored to have their picture featured on our page" also mentioned *"if we have media that checked in hotel and they want to write something nice, we will repost it. Like a nice text and nice review then we will repost them"* P1

Q 5: What are the difficulties faced by your hotel when trying to increase the level of customer's engagement?

From the interview, providing quick feedbacks from customer's inquiries has been identified as one of the major challenges faced by hotel's operator. One out of five participants referred that customers usually expect hotel operators to provide real time response to inquiries or comments.

> *"I think, because it is Facebook, they expected the answers within the seconds. Because, they feel like they chatting. I think that is the biggest challenge, because sometimes they don't realize they ask for reservation queries and this takes a little bit of time. So, I think that is one of most challenging part of Facebook at the moment, because I normally get a lot of people writing to us why haven't you answered me? It is been an hour. So, when we get the message we try to reply the messages within an hour but sometimes it is bit difficult so anyhow the most to take two to three hours and that is overnight and becomes a day."* P3

Not only that, hotel operators are also having challenges to come out with good and creative promotion materials to increase participation from the customers. One of the participants stated that creating fresh and interesting content is very important to increase the number of likes and followers.

> *"...the only difficulty is that if you don't post you don't increase in number of likes. ... we find, if you are quite one two weeks you don't post anything you have zero increase engagement and zero increase in people coming to your page"* P1

Finally, three out of five participants also highlighted the need to have dedicated personnel who is responsible to manage the Facebook account. The individual must dedicate most of his/her time on responding to inquiries and comments from customers. The respondents also highlighted that the individual in charge of the

Facebook account should have good communication skills. Having the ability to communicate in multi languages is additional value to hotel operators.

> *"To be honest with you <interviewer>, I think Facebook is a full time job, it is not something someone should do in an hour, it is very interesting but I just wish to have more time, then I can use it as useful expertly. It is not my only job it is part of my job. I have a lot of thing to do I also do the marketing and promotions for the resort which also include all forms of communication materials for resort and like festivals, activities, events."* P3

> *"For me disadvantage is not that much unless if we have bad comments that is all. Because if the guest comment in English language I can answer but we have in other languages and maybe you can translate but the translation is not accurate, right. So, it will be difficulty from there."* P2

> *"Actually, the big challenge is time and the not good comments"* P5

4.3 Quantitative Analysis

The aim of this quantitative analysis is to assess the engagement level between hotel operators in Malaysia and customers using Facebook platform. This assessment is based on the proposed benchmark elaborated in Chapter Two.

4.3.1 Profile of the Selected Hotels

The hotels were randomly chosen from the lists of hotels listed by Malaysian Association of Hotels (MAH) organization. Technically, the names of the hotels were scripted in MS Excel and each hotel was give the number and thereafter used in generating random numbers function (RANDBETWEEN (Bottom, Top)) to select forty from ninety-five hotels. Table 4.2 listed the selected forty hotels.

Table 4.2

Forty Hotels with its Facebook pages

No	Hotel name	Name's Facebook page	URL Facebook
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	The Andaman, Langkawi	https://www.facebook.com/TheAndamanLangkawi
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat, Ipoh	https://www.facebook.com/banjaranhotsprings
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	Berjaya Langkawi Resort – Malaysia	https://www.facebook.com/blrlgk
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	Casa del Rio, Melaka	https://www.facebook.com/casadelriomelaka
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	The Danna Langkawi	https://www.facebook.com/thedannalangkawi?fref=ts
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	The Datai Langkawi	https://www.facebook.com/thedatailangkawi/
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	DoubleTree by Hilton (Kuala Lumpur)	https://www.facebook.com/DoubletreeKL/
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	Eastern & Oriental Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/eohotels/
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	Evergreen Laurel Hotel Penang	https://www.facebook.com/EvergreenLaurelHotelPenang/
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	Four Seasons Resort Langkawi, Malaysia	https://www.facebook.com/FourSeasonsResortLangkawi
11	G HOTEL	G Hotel Penang	https://www.facebook.com/GHotel.Penang
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	Bunga Raya Island Resort & Spa and Gayana Eco Resort	https://www.facebook.com/bungaraya.gayana/

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13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	Grand Alora Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/grandalorahotel
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	Grand BlueWave Hotel Shah Alam	https://www.facebook.com/grandbluewave
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	Grand Millennium Kuala Lumpur (official page)	https://www.facebook.com/grandmillenniumkl
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	Holiday Villa Hotel & Suites Subang	https://www.facebook.com/HolidayVillaSubangMalaysia
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	Hotel Maya Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/hotelmayakualalumpur/
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	Hotel Perdana Kota Bharu	https://www.facebook.com/HotelPerdanaKotaBharu/
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	Hyatt Regency Kuantan Resort	https://www.facebook.com/HyattRegencyKuantan
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	InterContinental Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/intercontinental.kualalumpur
21	ISTANA HOTEL	Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur City Centre	https://www.facebook.com/HotelIstanaKualaLumpurCityCentre
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	Le Meridien Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/lemeridienkualalumpur
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	Lone Pine Hotel Penang	https://www.facebook.com/LonePineHotel
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/MandarinOrientalKualaLumpur/
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa, Langkawi	https://www.facebook.com/merituspelangibeachresort
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	Nexus Resort & Spa Karambunai	https://www.facebook.com/Nexus-Resort-Spa-Karambunai-564296923620128/?ref=hl
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	One World Hotel Petaling Jaya	https://www.facebook.com/OneWorldHotelPetalingJaya
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	Pacific Regency Hotel Suites	https://www.facebook.com/prhskl?ref=hl
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	Palace of the Golden Horses	https://www.facebook.com/PalaceOfTheGoldenHorses
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	PARKROYAL Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/Parkroyalkualalumpur
31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	Philea Resort & Spa, Melaka	https://www.facebook.com/philea.resort.melaka
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	The Official Page of Riverside Majestic Hotel Kuching	https://www.facebook.com/riversidemajestic/
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	Sama-Sama Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/SamaSamaHotel/
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	Shangri-La Hotel, Kuala Lumpur	https://www.facebook.com/shangrilaKL
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort and Spa	https://www.facebook.com/ShangrilaTAH/
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	Sheraton Imperial Kuala Lumpur Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/sheraton.imperial.kuala.lumpur

37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	Official Pages - Tanjung Rhu Resort, Luxury Resort Langkawi, Malaysia	https://www.facebook.com/TanjungRhuResort
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	The Westin Langkawi Resort and Spa	https://www.facebook.com/westin.langkawi
39	WESTIN, THE	The Westin Kuala Lumpur Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/westin.kl
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	The Zenith Hotel	https://www.facebook.com/TheZenithHotel

4.3.2 Quantitative Findings

This study adopts a content analysis technique. The researcher examines the posting on each selected Facebook accounted dated from December 2014 until February 2015 and from June until Aug 2015. In the content analysis, this study compares the activities for each hotel based on the five dimensions discussed in the previous chapters, to assess the engagement between Malaysian hotels and their customers. Specifically, to achieve the third research objective, this study analyzed forty Facebook pages and then compared these pages based on the activity and five dimensions of the engagement (Awareness, Attitude expression, voicing opinion, Advocacy and Loyalty).

4.3.2.1 Awareness

This dimension concentrates on the number of the page likes (also called fans) for each Hotel. Based on the analysis as shown in the Figure 4.3, five percent of hotels surveyed had less than 2,000 likes of page, nine percent of hotels were having from 2,001 to 3,000 likes, five percent of hotels were having 3,001 to 4,000 likes, eighteen percent of hotels have 4001 to 5000 likes and eight percent of hotels were having 5,001 to 6,000 likes. Whilst, fifty-eight percent selected hotels were having over 6,000 likes. Likes of pages of Facebook offer numerous means to the companies towards

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contacting and interacting with their customers (fans) and consider the first step to engagement.
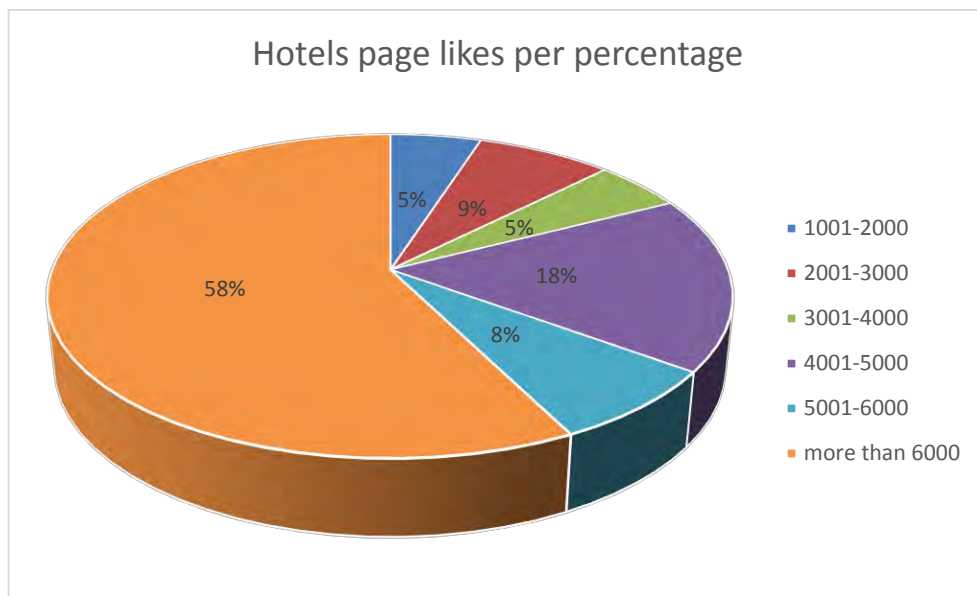
Figure 4.3 Illustrate the percentage number of likes for hotels pages

In average, the total number of likes for all selected hotels was 15,896 likes, the maximum number of like was 75,319 and the minimum number of likes is 1,137. The Table 4.3 illustrates the number of likes for each hotel and the average number of like for hotels.

Table 4.3

Illustrate the different number of likes for hotels pages

No	Hotel name	Number of Page Likes
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	20,478
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	14,422
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	3,780
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	7,918
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	4,549
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	17,106
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	26,977
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	9,728
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	1,315
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	10,516
11	G HOTEL	15,131
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	4,601
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	4,081
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	5,310
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	33,981
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	1,137
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	4,035
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	11,051
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	4,454
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	75,319
21	ISTANA HOTEL	16,538
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	18,059
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	12,859
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	54,850
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	5,429
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	2,482
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	4,542
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	3,382
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	11,199
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	5,220

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31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	44,158
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	4,042
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	2,592
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	52,107
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	74,085
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	13,458
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	2,441
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	15,302
39	WESTIN, THE	9,614
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	7,585
	Average	15,896
	Max	75,319
	Min	1,137

However, the findings showed that the number of persons who were on Facebook page likes varies widely among hotels in the sample of the study.

4.3.2.2 Attitude Expression

Irrespective of their dimension of awareness, to be successful brands also include the needs to interact with their current and potential customers. One of the grand challenges as a brand move up the social media management continuum is maintaining a relationship with customers. Fortunately, Facebook platform provides facilities that allow hotels to rule on whether interactions with their customers are meaningful. One of the features used to interact among the hotels and their customer is "like of the post". Through the press of like button, the customers display their consent for a posting that the hotel posted. Table 4.4 depicted the difference between the hotels based on the number of the likes per post. These numbers were calculated by dividing the total numbers of posts likes on the number of posts during the selected period.

Table 4.4

Numbers of likes per post

No	Hotel name	average number of likes per post
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	117.65
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	35.07
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	14.98
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	14.38
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	36.66
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	81.61
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	32.03
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	20.44
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	11.50
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	60.78
11	G HOTEL	21.00
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	11.67
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	9.96
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	12.81
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	11.50
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	3.19
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	65.85
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	11.87
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	19.05
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	125.08
21	ISTANA HOTEL	30.37
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	13.92
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	24.66
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	76.42
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	42.12
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	9.04
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	9.54
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	20.07
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	14.83
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	4.52

31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	18.65
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	2.65
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	11.68
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	179.15
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	122.38
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	49.83
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	19.83
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	20.23
39	WESTIN, THE	31.28
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	1.95
	Average	35.50
	Max	179.15
	Min	1.95

The results indicated that the average of number of likes per post for hotels was 35.5; the maximum number is approximately 179 and the minimum number is approximately 2. More precisely, seventy-two percent of the hotels have less than the average of the likes per post.

4.3.2.3 Voicing Opinion

Facebook provides the engagement with customers by commenting on the posting. Total number of comments was counted for each hotel's Facebook during the selected period as shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Numbers of comments per post

No	Hotel name	average number of comments per post
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	2.58
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	0.80
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	1.55

4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	0.54
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	2.81
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	2.78
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	1.23
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	0.88
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	1.77
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	1.76
11	G HOTEL	0.48
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	0.73
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	0.38
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	0.52
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	0.75
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	0.14
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	0.38
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	0.77
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	0.77
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	1.62
21	ISTANA HOTEL	1.33
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	0.44
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	0.96
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	0.81
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	2.36
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	0.30
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	0.59
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	0.15
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	0.94
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	0.24
31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	1.09
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	0.35
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	0.66
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	2.30
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	1.99
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	0.64
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	1.22

38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	0.91
39	WESTIN, THE	0.37
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	0.07
	Average	1.02
	Max	2.81
	Min	0.07

The average of comments per post is 1.02, the maximum number is 3 and the minimum number is 0. The results highlighted that sixty-five percent (26 out of 40 hotels) of hotels include less than 1 comment per post. Meanwhile, thirty-five percent of the hotels have more than the average.

4.3.2.4 Advocacy

The share of post is one of the ways that was created to illustrate the success of viral messages on Facebook page. Luckily, there is already a feature to measure (word of mouth) viral messages, which is the "share post" button. It displays the number of times a wall post was shared with someone. For the forty hotels analyzed, the average of the share per post was 1.11 shares per post. For seventy percent of the hotels, the number of the share was less or equal 1.11 shares during the selected period. Meanwhile, only thirty percent of hotels have number of shares greater than 1.11 times, including five percent of them having more than 5 shares per post such as Datai Langkawi and Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur as shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Number of shares per post

No	Hotel name	average number of shares per post
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	2.54

2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	0.46
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	0.42
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	0.22
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	1.41
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	5.82
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	1.35
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	0.57
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	0.45
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	1.72
11	G HOTEL	0.63
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	2.53
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	0.18
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	0.16
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	0.50
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	0.67
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	2.46
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	0.90
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	0.47
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	0.61
21	ISTANA HOTEL	0.65
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	0.48
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	1.37
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	1.81
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	0.68
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	0.23
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	0.40
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	0.43
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	0.63
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	0.16
31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	1.67
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	0.13
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	0.15
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	5.79
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	3.76

36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	0.74
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	0.11
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	0.59
39	WESTIN, THE	0.66
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	0.02
	Average	1.11
	Max	5.82
	Min	0.02

4.3.2.5 Loyalty

Check-in by using mobile phone is one of the top activities among users who go online with cell phones. Check-in feature is one of common methods for customers to express interest in a property such as hotel. Although it is important, this feature is not applied to all the hotel using the indicator "check-in" where ten percent of the hotel (Berjaya Langkawi Beach & Spa Resort, Holiday Villa Hotels & Suites Subang, Sama-Sama Hotel Kl International Airport and Tanjung Rhu Resort) do not display this feature on their Facebook page. However, eight percent of hotels had fewer than 1,000 customers' check-ins online, three percent of the hotels have 1,001-2,000 shares and another three percent of the hotels were having 2,001-3,000 shares. Whereas, eighty-one percent of the hotels had over 5,000 check-ins. Figure 4.4 below illustrates the figures mentioned.
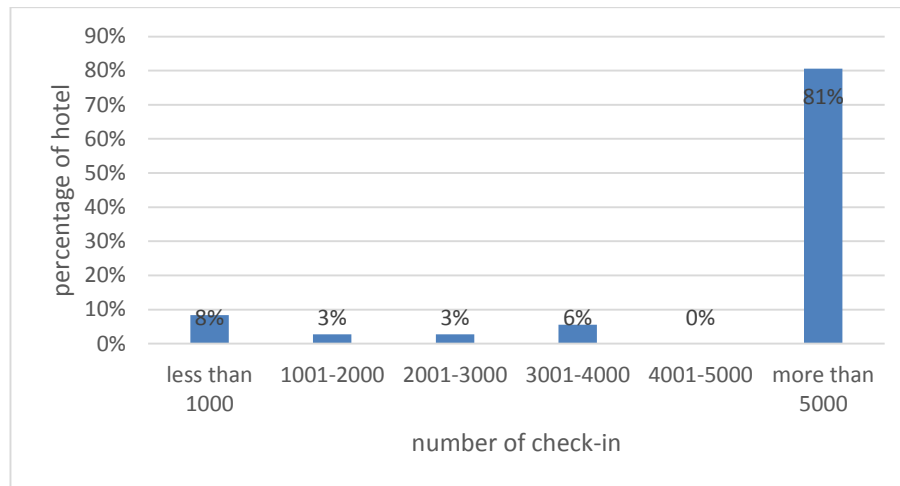
Figure 4.4 Illustration of the percentage of the number of check-ins for hotels pages

The average of the number of check-in was 42,336 check-ins in page with 41.67 percent of the hotels had more than the average. Meanwhile, 58.33 percent of the hotels page had less than the average. The maximum number of check-ins was 244,986 while the minimum was 71. The utilization of the check-in feature allows customers to share where they are. In addition, check-in provided the on page opportunity for the hotel to offer appropriate services. The hotels can furthermore utilize this function by sending welcome messages to guests and briefing them about activities and promotion during period stay. Table 4.7 clarifies the number of check-ins for each hotel's page.

Table 4.7

Number of check-in

No	Hotel name	check-in
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	29,224
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	14,147
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	N/A
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	13,401
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	11,427
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	1,742

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7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	131,622
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	36,119
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	790
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	18,274
11	G HOTEL	3,452
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	5,002
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	2,742
14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	12,033
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	43,894
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	N/A
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	12,382
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	8,561
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	58,098
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	83,965
21	ISTANA HOTEL	65,947
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	65,187
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	30,693
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	138,535
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	5,296
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	3,045
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	49,517
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	28,341
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	68,955
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	92
31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	54,465
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	71
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	N/A
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	244,986
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	72,120
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	55,440
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	N/A
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	33,321
39	WESTIN, THE	71,159
40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	50,052

Average	42336
Max	244986
Min	71

4.3.2.6 The Engagement Index

For the third research question, five dimensions (Awareness, Attitude expression, voicing opinion, advocacy and loyalty) and aggregate index of the engagement were used as explained in Section 3.5.3.1. Table 4.8 represents the engagement index result for each hotel. As shown in these results, the best top number of engagement index was 20.10 while the minimum engagement index was 0.80 and the average was 6.36.

Table 4.8

The engagement index

No	Hotel name	Attitude expression	Voicing opinion	Advocacy	Loyalty	Engagement E
1	ANDAMAN DATAI BAY LANGKAWI, THE	5.75	0.13	0.12	1.43	6
2	BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, THE	2.43	0.06	0.03	0.98	2.52
3	BERJAYA LANGKAWI BEACH & SPA RESORT	3.96	0.41	0.11	N/A	4.48
4	CASA DEL RIO MELAKA	1.82	0.07	0.03	1.69	1.92
5	DANNA LANGKAWI HOTEL, THE	8.06	0.62	0.31	2.51	8.99
6	DATAI LANGKAWI, THE	4.77	0.16	0.34	0.10	5.27
7	DOUBLETREE BY HILTON KUALA LUMPUR	1.19	0.05	0.05	4.88	1.29
8	EASTERN & ORIENTAL HOTEL	2.10	0.09	0.06	3.71	2.25
9	EVERGREEN LAUREL HOTEL	8.75	1.35	0.35	0.60	10.45
10	FOUR SEASONS RESORT LANGKAWI	5.78	0.17	0.16	1.74	6.11
11	G HOTEL	1.39	0.03	0.04	0.23	1.46
12	GAYANA ECO RESORT	2.54	0.16	0.55	1.09	3.25
13	GRAND ALORA HOTEL	2.44	0.09	0.04	0.67	2.57

14	GRAND BLUEWAVE HOTEL SHAH ALAM	2.41	0.10	0.03	2.27	2.54
15	GRAND MILLENNIUM KUALA LUMPUR	0.34	0.02	0.01	1.29	0.37
16	HOLIDAY VILLA HOTELS & SUITES SUBANG	2.81	0.12	0.59	N/A	3.52
17	HOTEL MAYA KUALA LUMPUR	16.32	0.10	0.61	3.07	17.03
18	HOTEL PERDANA KOTA BHARU	1.07	0.07	0.08	0.77	1.22
19	HYATT REGENCY KUANTAN RESORT	4.28	0.17	0.10	13.04	4.55
20	INTERCONTINENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	1.66	0.02	0.01	1.11	1.69
21	ISTANA HOTEL	1.84	0.08	0.04	3.99	1.96
22	LE MERIDIEN KUALA LUMPUR	0.77	0.02	0.03	3.61	0.82
23	LONE PINE HOTEL	1.92	0.07	0.11	2.39	2.1
24	MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR	1.39	0.01	0.03	2.53	1.43
25	MERITUS PELANGI BEACH RESORT & SPA	7.76	0.43	0.13	0.98	8.32
26	NEXUS RESORT & SPA KARAMBUNAI, KOTA KINABALU	3.64	0.12	0.09	1.23	3.85
27	ONE WORLD HOTEL	2.10	0.13	0.09	10.90	2.32
28	PACIFIC REGENCY HOTEL SUITES KUALA LUMPUR	5.94	0.04	0.13	8.38	6.11
29	PALACE OF THE GOLDEN HORSES	1.32	0.08	0.06	6.16	1.46
30	PARKROYAL KUALA LUMPUR	0.87	0.05	0.03	0.02	0.95
31	PHILEA RESORT & SPA	0.42	0.02	0.04	1.23	0.48
32	RIVERSIDE MAJESTIC HOTEL	0.66	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.78
33	SAMA-SAMA HOTEL KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	4.51	0.25	0.06	N/A	4.82
34	SHANGRI-LA HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	3.44	0.04	0.11	4.70	3.59
35	SHANGRI-LA'S TANJUNG ARU RESORT & SPA	1.65	0.03	0.05	0.97	1.73
36	SHERATON IMPERIAL HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR	3.70	0.05	0.05	4.12	3.8
37	TANJUNG RHU RESORT	8.13	0.50	0.05	N/A	8.68
38	WESTIN LANGKAWI RESORT & SPA, THE	1.32	0.06	0.04	2.18	1.42
39	WESTIN, THE	3.25	0.04	0.07	7.40	3.36

40	ZENITH HOTEL, THE	0.26	0.01	0.00	6.60	0.27
	Average	3.37	0.15	0.12	3.02	6.36
	Max	16.32	1.35	0.61	13.04	20.10
	Min	0.26	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.80

To know which of the hotels have good engagement, this study compares the average of the engagement index. Figure 4.5 below stated that 37 percent of the hotels were above the average while 63 percent were less than average.
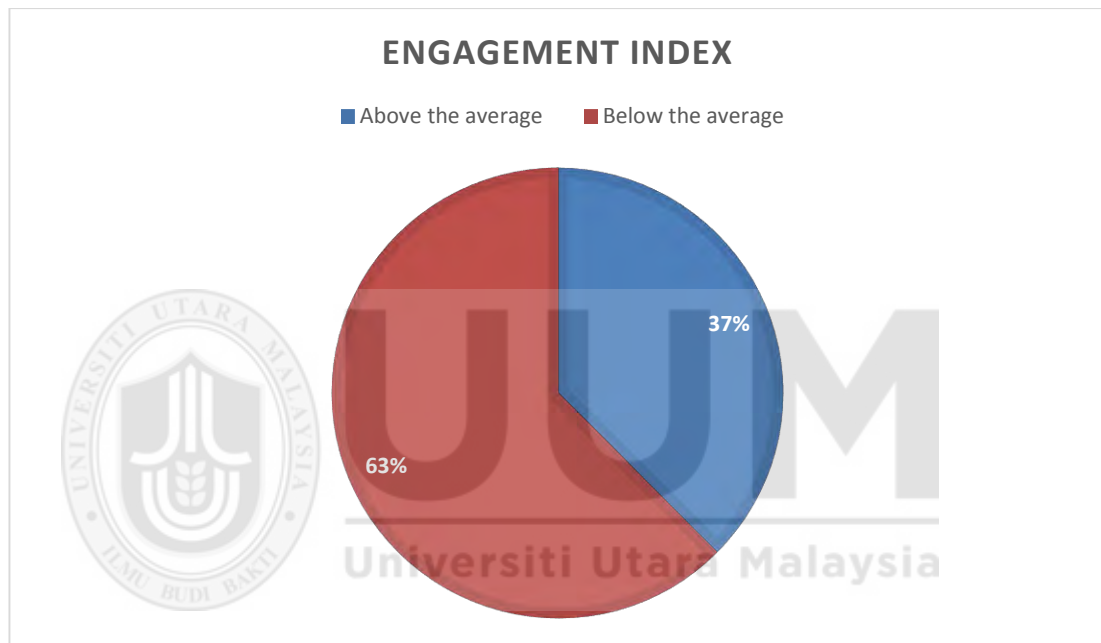
Figure 4.5 The percentage of engagement index

4.8 Summary of the Chapter Four

The major purpose of this chapter is to fulfill the objectives of the study. The literature review and interviews as well as content analysis are essential resources for this purpose. This chapter introduced the data analysis procedure by dividing it into two main sections. The first section elaborates on interviews, the second section highlighted on the descriptive statistics result of content analysis. In the next chapter, the result will be discussed in in detail.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter. The research findings are discussed based on the research objective. It is complemented with an address on the contribution of this study. It is ended-up with some recommendations for future enhancement.

5.2 Discussion on Research Objectives

The interviews and content analysis were carried out to attain the objectives of this study. Hence, this section discusses the results that support the objectives of this study.

5.2.1 Research Objective 1: To understand how Malaysia hotel operators use Facebook to socially engage with customers.

The first objective of the current study aims at exploring how five-star hotels in Malaysia employ social media (such as Facebook) to engage with their customers. Regarding that, the findings of the interviews reveal that Malaysian hotels are using Facebook to interact with customers and this interaction took several forms. As an example, hotels utilize Facebook to publish different materials about their facilities such as publishing pictures, uploading videos, announcing upcoming events, promotions, and special packages.

Posting different subjects and materials on Facebook page not only can attract new potential customers, but it can start another type of interaction such as the interaction and the dialog between the customers. This makes people be more collaborative and start sharing their joyful experience with each other. This finding is consistent with the findings of Chung, Anaza, Park, and Hall-Phillips (2016), who found that active

contributors were characterized by a higher tendency to connect with others and to make active dialogs to social media sites by creating and uploading personal contents such as text, photos, images, and videos.

Facebook has now become a virtual front desk, to receive the complaints, feedback and suggestions. All suggestions and complaints could be noticed swiftly. The negligence on the customers' complaints and queries will lead to losing customers and this generates negative impression about the hotel. This opinion agrees with Balaji, Jha, and Royne (2015), who stated that customers can now use social media platforms to complain more directly, conveniently, and effectively. In addition, Grégoire, Salle, and Tripp (2014) pointed out that if the customers do not receive a quick response, the complaint can be moved to a public domain, causing major problems for the service provider.

The results of study disclosed that five-star hotels have several plans to encourage the customers to engage with the Facebook page of the hotel; where, the participants highlighted that they motivate their customers to engage through giving them some gifts or provide free services. The study by Gummerus, Liljander, Weman, and Pihlström (2012) explained this way of motivation, where they stated that the companies may want to reward and encourage customers to be more active on the online sites to get greater relationship benefit from the communities.

Another way to increase the customers' engagement as declared by the participants is by update the content of the Facebook page for hotel continually. Moreover, the participants referred that the hotels sometimes use famous character persons (such as, actor/actress) to increase the engagement during their stay in a hotel by sharing his or

her picture in hotel's page. Another way for increasing the engagement is by encouraging the customers to take pictures about the hotel and share their happy time about it on Facebook. Thereafter, the hotel will re-post the nice picture and re-post the nice post about the hotel that is taken by the customers.

As for of the difficulties faced the hotels through using Facebook as a tool to interact with the customers, the findings indicate that the most common difficulty is keeping the page active all the time. For example, participants stated that Facebook page should be active and continues to publish information and answer to the customers' queries directly every time, and added that managing the hotel's Facebook page needs someone dedicated to work full time on it. This issue is also stated by previous studies, for instance Hanna et al. (2011), that the challenge faced by many companies is that although they recognize the need to be active in social media, they do not truly understand how to do it effectively. Additionally, the communication language was also one of the barriers that impede the interaction between the customers and the person responsible of the social media platform as the different customers could come from different countries with different backgrounds and native languages.

As a conclusion, the hotels in Malaysia are using Facebook to interact with the customers through firstly, posting posts, publishing pictures, uploading videos, announcing events, promotions and packages; this point can also be used to start conversations and dialogs among the customers themselves. Secondly, replying to customers' queries, comments, and complains.

In addition to what has been mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the findings also show that there are a variety of styles to encourage customers and increase their

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engagement, such as giving the guests some gifts, providing free services, dealing in a friendly way with the customers whom commented and updated the content of the hotel's page constantly. Another way to increase the engagement is by re-posting nice pictures or nice posts uploaded by the customers themselves about the hotel.

At the same time, there are several challenges facing the hotel when using Facebook, which are the effectiveness, keeping the page information up-to-date all the time, replying to the comments in a timely manner, the need for full-time job for managing and maintaining the hotel Facebook page, and last but not least should having the ability to communicate in multi languages.

5.2.2 Research Objective 2: To identify the technique used by Malaysia hotel operators to measure their level of social engagement.

The results highlight two techniques used for measuring Facebook activities. Firstly, this study measures the engagement by using Google analytics. Secondly, by simply observing the contents of the page (i.e. manually). This study discovers that not all participating hotels compare their own pages with other competitive hotels' pages to know how other hotels are using Facebook and which posts have more likes, comments by the customers and how the hotels engage with their customers.

In addition, the findings indicate that "page like" is considered an important metric to assess the engagement level. This result supports Sahin, Zehir, and Kitapçı (2011), who found that when fans join a Facebook page of a particular brand, they form a sense of loyalty towards the brand. This agrees with Dholakia and Durham (2010) who assert that fans who join Facebook pages are more likely to visit stores than those who do not. Moreover, Gupta and Harris (2010) stated that the fans are more willing to leave

positive reviews on the internet.

The results also reveal that the comments on a post form a significant feature that can support the engagement between the customers and the hotels. In regards to that, Fan and Gordon (2014) recommend that hotels create a diversity of activities, including comments and liking on the product websites to enhance the relationship with customers. In addition, Yuan, Qi, and Marcus (2015) stated that customers' comments on services are used as customer feedback to measure customers' experiences and improve the customer satisfaction. This supports Mich and Baggio (2015), who discovered that interactions on most social networks take place via posts; so, the feedback for any given post must be reviewed in terms of users' comments and engagement on other social networking sites.

With regard to the "check-in" metric, it is still new and the results show that not all participating hotels concentrate on this metric as an important indicator to the level of customers' engagement, and not all hotels measure it. As for the "like of post" metric, the results show that some of the hotels took into account this metric as an important indicator to measure the engagement, whereas other hotels neglect the importance of this indicator. On the other hand, the literatures assert that "likes" provide essential evidence of engagement with customers (Gerolimos, 2011; Glazer, 2012). For Gerolimos (2011), a "like" is comparable to a comment and is an alternative for users to express their agreement with the original post. Thackeray et al. (2012) state that "like of post" is part of the engagement process. They mean that when a user clicks the like icon, share or comment on post of brand, it automatically generates electronic WOM, such as showing in friends' feed (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; De Vries,

Gensler & Leeflang, 2012). Meanwhile, the results indicate that there is less attention or focus on the "share of post" metric. This implies that the hotel operators in Malaysia do measure the engagement between the hotel page and customers, but they do not have a good understanding on how to do it in a systematic way. Furthermore, these hotels neglect some of the important metrics that are recommended by the literatures, which can consequently affect the level of engagement.

As a summary, the hotel operators in Malaysia do measure their engagement with customers, but they do not have very good understanding on how to do it. Some of the participants believe that some indicators are important, while other hotels ignore it. However, based on the information elicited from the participants over the interviews, they do attend to comments. The participants refer to comments and the hotel must monitor them, because some of the comments involve queries about the hotel or bad comments about the services.

Likewise, the like of the page, is also an essential feature in the Facebook. The participants consider "likes of the page" as an import indicator that measures the popularity of the hotel. With regard to t "check-in", the participants expressed that they observe the check-in and need to support this feature in the future. However, the participants stated they have this feature in their page but they do not focus on it. Furthermore, the number of like per post received minimum attention by the hotel operators, only one participant state observing the likes of post. In contrast, the participant state it is not important. In addition, only one participant mentioned the "share" feature. Table 5.1 summarizes the indicators (features) mentioned by participants as a results of the interviews.

Table 5.1

The indicators (features) mentioned by participants

Participant	Page like	Likes of post	Comments	Share	Check-in
P1	√		√	√	√
P2	√		√		√
P3	√	√	√		√
P4	√		√		
P5	√		√		

## 5.2.3 Research Objective 3: To assess the level of social engagement between hotel operators in Malaysia using Facebook.

To achieve the third objective, content analysis on the hotels' Facebook pages was carried out. The purpose of content analysis is to determine whether there are significant differences among hotel brands with regard to the level of engagement. The data indicated the significance of Facebook platform as a communication channel between the hotel operators and customers. The findings uncovered that in recent years, the five-star hotels in Malaysia are moving towards a social media marketing era. Harnessing Facebook in hotels in Malaysia is good, since all five-star hotels have their own Facebook pages. Therefore, in order to highlight the level of the engagement between hotel operators and customers, five dimensions of engagement that were proposed earlier is discussed based on the results from the previous chapter.

The first dimension of the engagement is called the awareness. This dimension depends on the number of likes (fans). In general, to measure the number of "page likes" of a hotel's Facebook page, the operator depends on the number of people who have clicked the "like" icon of the page. In using Facebook, there are two types of likes (1) one that allows users to become a follower of a community page or as called

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audience, (2) and the second for acknowledging or evaluating posts. In this study, it is focused on the first type. The results show that there is disparity of the number of the likes among the hotels. For instance, the top ten percent are Intercontinental Kuala Lumpur (75319), Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa (74085), Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur (54850) and Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur (52107). Meanwhile, the lower four hotels with awareness are Holiday Villa Hotels & Suites Subang (1137), Evergreen Laurel Hotel (1315), Tanjung Rhu Resort (2441) and Nexus Resort & Spa Karambunai, Kota Kinabalu (2482).

The term "like of the post" is popularized through Facebook and it is a sign of assessment of the activity of another user, whether it is a status update, photo post, video upload, or post promoting. With regard to attitude expression, the findings reveal that there is a high difference in the number of likes per post among the selected hotels. The average of likes per post for all selected hotels is 35. Figure 5.1 details it, in which twenty-eight percent of hotels have more than average, like Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur (179), Intercontinental Kuala Lumpur (125), Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa (122) and Andaman Datai Bay Langkawi (118). In contrast, approximately seventy-two percent of the hotels had less than the average: Zenith Hotel (2), Riverside Majestic Hotel (3), Holiday Villa Hotels & Suites Subang (3) and Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur (5).
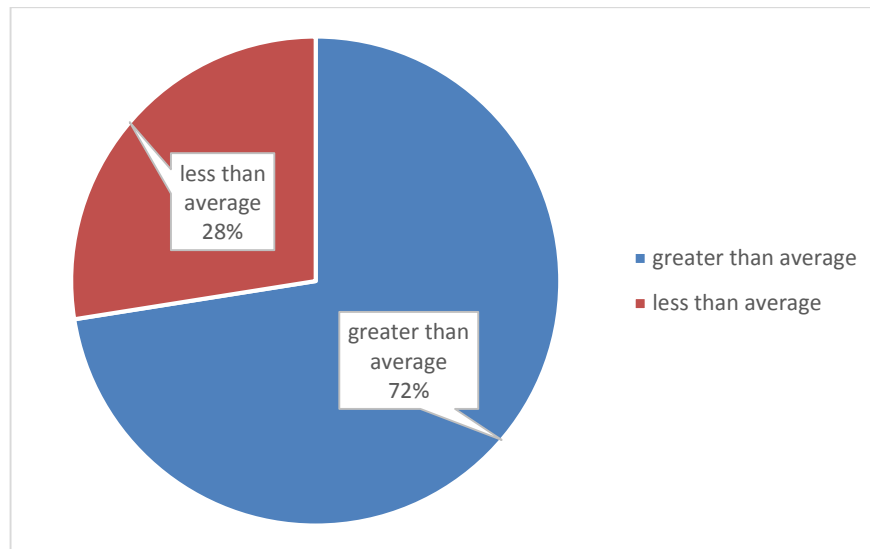
Figure 5.1 Percentage of number likes per post for hotels

As for the third dimension, voice opinion, the results show that the hotels have less participation rate on the number of comments per post than the likes per post. The average of the comments per post for all selected hotels is approximately 1. Therefore, the results clarify that thirty-five percent of the hotels has more than the average. Meanwhile, about sixty-five percent of the hotels have less than the average. The top ten percent of hotels with great comments include Danna Langkawi Hotel, Datai Langkawi, Andaman Datai Bay Langkawi (3) and Meritus Pelangi Beach Resort & Spa (2). In contrast, Zenith Hotel, Holiday Villa Hotels & Suites Subang, Pacific Regency Hotel Suites Kuala Lumpur, and Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur receive no comment.

Advocacy is the fourth dimension of engagement. This dimension focuses on the number of "share". Based on the average of the share per post for all selected hotels (1.11), the results show that seventy percent of the hotels are less than the average. Only thirty percent of the participating hotels have greater than the average number of share. The top four hotels are Datai Langkawi (6), Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur

(6), Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa (4), and Andaman Datai Bay Langkawi (3). In contrast, Zenith Hotel, Tanjung Rhu Resort, Riverside Majestic Hotel, and Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport have not been shared.

The improvements in the social media platforms help creating new features for engagement. One of these feature is called "check-in", and it is an indicator to measure the loyalty (Minazzi & Lagrosen, 2013). The results indicate that not all participating hotels exploit this feature in their Facebook page. Particularly, ten percent of the hotels neglect this feature. In general, this percentage is good compared with the results of study conducted in European countries by Minazzi et al. (2013), who found that 7 of 15 hotels use the feature. This study reveals that the average of check-in is (42,336) for all participating hotels. In detail, forty-two percent of the hotels have more than the average. Meanwhile, fifty-eight percent of the hotels Facebook have less than the average. The best four hotels in check-in are Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur (244,986), Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur (138,535), Doubletree by Hilton Kuala Lumpur (131,622), and Intercontinental Kuala Lumpur (83,965). In contrast, the lowest four are Riverside Majestic Hotel (71), Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur (92), Evergreen Laurel Hotel (790), and Datai Langkawi (1742).

To know which of the hotels have good engagement, this study compares with the average of the engagement index (6.36). Obviously, Hotel Maya Kuala Lumpur has a higher level of engagement index (20.1), followed by Hyatt Regency Kuantan Resort (17.59), Pacific Regency Hotel Suites Kuala Lumpur (14.49), and One World Hotel (13.22). In contrast, Riverside Majestic Hotel has a lesser engagement index (0.80) followed by Parkroyal Kuala Lumpur (0.97), Grand Millennium Kuala Lumpur (1.66),

and G Hotel (1.69).

The previous paragraphs detail the results, which could explain that there are many customers who like the Facebook page of the hotels, but they do not interact with it. Also, the participating hotels have different engagement with customers, which could be seen through the number of page likes, likes of posts, comments of posts, shares of posts, and check-in. The others have less numbers, nearly to zero especially comments and shares. The findings also discover that the number of likes of posts by customers is greater than the number of comments and shares. In addition, there are differences in the number of check-in among hotels. In general, the findings reveal that there are differences in engagement index among the participating hotels.

Therefore, based on the results of content analysis, the hotels with less engagement should explore a way to enhance their engagement through increasing the number of like of post, number of the comments, and share the post as well as motive their customers to check-in by mobile or any modern devices. In addition, the hotels should look for a way to make the customers more interactive on their page through comments and shares.

5.3 Contribution of the Study

This study contributes to the body of knowledge through its two main contributions; theoretical and practical contributions. As a theoretical contribution, this study has three main points. Firstly, this study enhances the understanding on how Malaysian hotel operators use Facebook to socially engage with customers. Secondly, it provides an understanding on how Malaysian hotel operators measure their level of engagement with customers using Facebook. Thirdly, it proposes the mechanism to analyze the

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engagement between hotel industry and customers by using Facebook. This study combines the existing metrics and provides a mechanism to assess the engagement between the hotel operators and their customers. Also, this study examines five dimensions to measure the hotels' engagement with customers through Facebook, each dimension contains one metric. On top of that, this study extends the engagement formula by Bonsón et al. (2013), by adding a new dimension called "loyalty" that includes "Check-in" metric.

Practically, this study provides an exploratory data on how Malaysian hotels manage the level of engagement. More precisely, it provides a guideline on how to improve engagement activities between hotel industry in Malaysia and their customers. The objective of the benchmark model is to help hoteliers improve their Facebook pages, achieving the highest possible level of customer engagement and provide a mechanism (tool) to support their online positioning and compare their implementations with their competitors. It is significant because until now, most studies on the use of social media by hotel industry have been conducted in developed countries. With regard to the social media platforms and tourism, there was a low interest by previous studies in this type of research, in particular in the hotel sector. Therefore, this empirical study sought to enrich the literature with valuable information relevant to assessing the interaction of hotels with customers through social networks.

In short, Malaysia is a developing country in the field of tourism and hospitality. Therefore, to maintain this progress, there is need for empirical and theoretical studies, especially with the development of modern communication technologies. So far, most of the research in this area are conducted in the European countries. Thus, to the best

of our knowledge, this study is the initial empirical study focusing on social media with five-star hotels in Malaysia. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study are also important for practitioners and researchers, as they could shape a foundation for the advancement of research. The academicians and students could employ this work as a source for discussions on social media benchmark and can be applied in other organizations.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations. Firstly, this study focuses solely on five-star hotels in Malaysia. If the four-star hotels are also considered, more data could have been gathered. However, this study have to focus on the five-star hotels only to avoid uncertain barriers. There is no problem, because as recommended by Sekaran (2003) and Creswell (2009), time, cost, and willingness of the participants are important criteria for identifying the scope.

The second limitation of this study lies in the consideration of Facebook alone, in representing social media. This study is aware of other social media (such as Twitter and YouTube) but at the same time is not able to afford for them.

5.5 Conclusion and Future Work

The aim of this study is to analyze the use of Facebook by five-star hotels. Indeed, the purpose is to determine whether there are significant differences among hotel operators on the methods in which they employs Facebook to engage with customers. This study proposes that the benchmark includes five dimensions, in which every dimension has one metric.

The content analysis method is used in this study to collect information from the

hotels' official Facebook. Moreover, the interview technique is also used to gather the in-depth information from participants. Altogether, data were gathered from 40 official Facebook pages of 40 hotels, accompanied with five semi-structure interviews.

The findings demonstrate that Facebook plays an important role in engaging customers because Facebook is considered as a virtual front desk that supports dealing with customers and answering their queries and there is a difference in the engagement index with customers by Malaysian hotels. Additionally, the findings indicate that there is less attention from customers, especially with comments and share compared with likes of comments and check-in.

Actually, if hotel operators in Malaysia need to use the Facebook platform effectively, they should boost customers to engagement with Facebook page through pressing like, adding comments, clicking share, and pressing check-in.

For future enhancement, this study recommends others to conduct many empirical studies that contain all levels of hotels, because each level (mean 1,2,3,4, and 5-star) might have different perspectives and different strategies based on their financial ability. Asian countries need more attention on the social media with hotel sector, in particular Malaysia. Furthermore, the researchers in the future need to focus on different social media platforms.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction

Good morning sir/ madam

Thank you to making time to meet me. My name is NAWAR ABBOOD FADHIL, master student. I am here today to get your valuable feedback as a hotel employer. I would like inform you that there is no right or wrong answers so please free to express your views whatever they may be.

Social media (Facebook) has spread extensively over the years across the globe. One of the areas experiencing significant growth is tourism and especially hotels. From here, I have some questions I would like ask you which are the following:

Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Nawar Abbood

Master student at University Utara Malaysia (UUM)

Phone no: 01136540207

E-mail: nawar_fathel@yahoo.com

Section A: Demographic Questions

1- Your age?

2- Gender?

3- Your current job position?

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4- Name of the hotel?

5- How many years of experience you have in the hotel industry?

Section B: Questions

1. How does your hotel use Facebook to support engagement with customers?

2. Who is responsible for maintaining or developing strategies/campaigns using the hotel's Facebook page?

3. How does your hotel measure the level of customer's engagement using Facebook?

4. How does your hotel motivate customers to engage with your Facebook account?

5. What are the difficulties faced by your hotel when trying to increase the level of customer's engagement?

Question Ends. Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear participant

My name is Nawar Abbood Fadhil; I am a MSc candidate at the University Utara Malaysia. You are invited to participate in this research study which aims at identifying the issues and metrics used in measure the engagement between the hotels in Malaysia and consumers through social media (Facebook).

The following points will highlight the role of the participant and other important issues.

1- You will be kindly asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. Your participation in this study is absolutely voluntary. At the interview you (i.e. the participant) will have the freedom to express your opinions, prior experiences and perceptions regarding the measurement social media engagement.

2- The participant has the right to withdraw from the study at any time without worrying about any penalties or consequences.

3- The interview location and timing will be decided by the participant to assure his/her convenience. The interview will last for approximately from 15 to 30 minutes.

4- The participant's identity will be kept confidential, will not be disclosed to any third party and will not be mentioned within the study's body or the final report. A coding procedure will be used to replace the participant's name in order to ensure his/her identity confidentiality. However, the results of the study can be published but without declaring the names of the participants.

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5- The interview will be digitally recorded in order to be transcribed later for the purpose of analysis and information extraction. The interview material will be stored securely for a period of two years, after that it will be destroyed.

After clarifying all the important points regarding this study and the participants' role and rights, if you have any further inquiries you may contact the researcher on the following contact information; the researcher's e-mail (nawar_fathel@yahoo.com) and mobile No. (01136540207).

Thanks for your participation, your time and efforts are truly appreciated.

Signature of the interviewee -------------------------------,   Date------------------------

Name ---

Place of job ---

Current position --

Phone No. ---

E-mail --

APPENDIX C

Constructed which lists the categories used to code data

List of categories for the content analysis

#	Category	Description
1.	Date	Date the Facebook page captured.
2.	Time	Time the Facebook page was captured.
3.	hotel name	Name of hotel as it appears on the Facebook page.
4.	Facebook (FB) page URL	The Facebook page URL
5.	Total number of post on FB page	How many posts the hotel have at the time of the capture?
6.	Number of page likes (fans)	How many fans does the hotel have at the time of the capture?
7.	Total number of likes on FB post	How many likes on the posts the hotel have at the time of the capture?
8.	Total number of comments on FB post	How many comments on the posts the hotel at the time of the capture?
9.	Total number of sharing posts on FB post	How many people sharing the hotel posting at the time of the capture?
10.	Total number of people check-in	How many people check-in?