SAXION UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

PLAYAS**O**L
IBIZA HOTELS

Approach of an online reputation strategy

BACHELOR THESIS

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Ying Yee Tang Tang

Bachelor Thesis

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Approach of an online reputation strategy for Hotel Piscis

Palma de Mallorca, 10/09/2018

I hereby declare that:

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

Name: Ying Yee Tang Tang

Date: 10-09-2018

Signature:

Foreword

Dear reader,

In order to finalize the bachelor career of Tourism Management at the Hospitality Business School of Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Deventer, the Netherlands it is required to do a last course called thesis semester. This course consists of conducting an independent research to develop an advice or a new designed solution to a strategic management for a client within the hospitality sector. In this piece of work all the knowledge and skills acquired during the four years of study will be applied on a bachelor level.

This thesis assignment has been developed with the support of three parties, a thesis tutor and a second examiner providing the guidance during the semester conducting the research and writing the report, as well as the two clients the hotel factory hotel consulting firm and PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels chain.

The following thesis report provides the reader an online reputation management approach for one particular hotel establishment of PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, Hotel Piscis. The thesis report is structured with a general introduction, a research part and an advisory part. In the introduction, the clients and the reasoning of the assignment with the management problem is presented which is the low online reputation of Hotel Piscis. Secondly, the methodology in which the research was conducted is presented which consisted in interviews to experts about the ORM content and desktop research to collect data about the ORM strategies of the competitors of Hotel Piscis. Finally, the advice, consisting on a strategic plan about how effectively handle their online reputation in 2019 to compete in the market as a renovated 4**** hotel.

I would like to thank the hotel factory for their support providing me the project and the contact with the client benefiting from this thesis assignment, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, as well as the opportunity of forming part of their team as a junior consultant intern from October 2017 until February 2018 at their office in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. In addition, I would like to thank PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels for the trust and contributing with all the information required to conduct this assignment. Moreover, I would like to express my gratitude to my first examiner Mr. Ab Willemsen and second examiner Mrs. Alekseeva for their support and feedback given during the development of this piece of work. Lastly, I would like to thank the interviewees, for taking the time to conduct the interview and provide me with substantial content about ORM for the advice for PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels.

I personally believe carrying out this thesis assignment, I became an expert in the ORM field which did not feel as an effort since I chose the topic as it was of my interest. Indeed, it was a time consuming and demanding period conducting the research and writing the report. However, the effort was worth it, by providing a solid advice for the hotel chain and still gaining knowledge about the touristic and hotel sector myself.

Spain, August 2018

Ying Yee Tang Tang

Executive Summary

The aim of this thesis project is an advice for PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels on an effective ORM strategy for Hotel Piscis in order to solve its management problem of having a low online reputation influencing sales. The hotel establishment will experience an upgrade in category from a 2** to a 4**** category accommodation, thus it will have the opportunity of starting its online reputation from scratch.

This assignment has been corrected based on the feedback provided by the tutor and second examiner. The improvements have been applied in all sections of the thesis in order to ensure the coherence of the project. These changes have been made noticeable with a yellow marker to facilitate the assessment of the report. For the quick retake the changes have been marked with a grey marker, the changes have been mostly applied in the advice section but also shortly in the research section to make it coherent with the advice part.

Methods of this research include a literature review on ORM, thus relying on theoretical framework and this being pattern matched with the findings of 5 interviews conducted to the experts in the field in order to get an insight into ORM strategies. Besides, desk research was carried out about the ORM strategies of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis as a 4**** accommodation consisting of 5 hotels located in the area of Sant Antoni, Ibiza, Spain. Thus primary and secondary data collection has been applied.

The first research's findings resulted on gaining an insight in the management of online reputation by hoteliers understanding the goal of online reputation management, the responsible of the tasks of ORM, strategies to carry out ORM and the best tools and platforms to use to measure the performance. The second research resulted in an analysis of the current online reputation management strategies of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis Hotel as a 4**** category hotel specifically for the location of Sant Antoni. This desk research collected the following information: online presence, web 2.0 involvements, ratings, numbers of reviews and ways of responding to reviews.

Based on the findings of the research, the researcher came up with three strategies:
1. Encouraging and responding reviews via Booking.com
2. Introducing booking via Facebook
3. Monitoring online reviews via ReviewPro
Strategy 1 was chosen to be the most suitable for Hotel Piscis to be implemented according to a criterion of time, financial costs, and objective of the research, resources and feasibility. This was considered the most appropriate strategy as it was well substantiated by research, following the patterns of carrying out effective ORM and multiple studies supporting the theory of the relation between number of positive reviews and total revenue.

LIST OF ABBREVATIONS

PIH   PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels

THF   the hotel factory

ORM   Online Reputation Management

KPI   Key Performance Indicators

IBR   Independent Business Review

Compset   Competitive Set

UGC   User Generated Content

TABLE OF CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 CLIENT

The client of this thesis assignment is the hotel chain PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels. PIH is a Spanish group of hotels with more than 40 years of experience with a total of 37 establishments on the Balearic Islands. The company positions itself as an indisputable leader on the island of Ibiza with respect to number of hotels and rooms with 36 hotels and more than 4000 rooms. See on Appendix I for comparison. The hotel chain stands out because of the freedom and permissiveness given to the client by the staff within the hotel facilities, allowing any kind of complementary activities with regards to noisiness, alcohol consumption among others.

One of their current projects is the renovation of one of their hotel establishments, Piscis Hotel. Piscis Hotel will be upgrading the establishment from a 2** to a 4**** category hotel by means of a repositioning project and architectural reforms in 2019, as a result of an Independent Business Review carried out by a Spanish hotel consulting firm, *the hotel factory*. PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels counts with the assets and ambition of improving its product as the hotel chain is in a growing economic situation with cero debts and expanding its capital. According to *the hotel factory* calculations, this project requires an investment of approximately €14.5 million.

Hotel Piscis is currently a 2** category hotel with a total of 366 rooms located at second beach line in San Antonio de Portmany, approximately 150 meters from the beach. As a low-category hotel, its current main attributes consist of basic hotel services including a swimming pool, restaurant and a bar, nonetheless, it stands out by being an adults-only hotel[1]. With regards to the customers, Ibiza is known as the most popular clubbing destination; therefore, the main target group of Hotel Piscis consists of young travelers seeking hedonistic playgrounds with others of their own age. Piscis hotel guests' age ranges from 20 to 40 years old and the British market positions itself as the main target group making up to 65% of the occupation followed by Italy and Spain with a 15%.

Whilst conducting the benchmark analysis for the IBR for Hotel Piscis, a significant weakness of the hotel establishment was noticed. This weakness is the low online reputation of the accommodation compared to its competitors. With the consent and support of the hotel factory, this concern was communicated to the director of PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels and it was agreed that it is a relevant issue to address, especially before introducing the upgrade of category that the new hotel establishment will undergo in 2019. Accordingly, the management problem of this thesis assignment is that Piscis Hotel presents the lowest scores of online reputation compared to its current main competitors as it can be observed in the table in Appendix I.

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1   term used by the Spanish hotel industry to refer to hotels that don't allowed children in their facilities.

1.2 RELEVANCE OF THE PROJECT

The relevance of this management problem to the client is the impact that the current online reputation of Hotel Piscis has on the sales. In fact, recent studies confirm the relationship between online reputation and sales, with transactional data stating that a hotel can increase its price by 11,20% if it increases its score by 1 point on a 5-point scale or 1% increase in hotel's reputation score leading to a 1,42% in revenue per available room (RevPAR).(Destination BC, 2013) Besides, another prevalent motive is the obstacle that this issue can denote when introducing the upgraded hotel in 2019. Moreover, the issue is aggravated by the growing reliance on the Internet as an information source when making choices about tourism products, especially on peer consumer opinions available online. Additional support to this thesis assignment is the various studies acknowledging the importance of applying online reputation management for performance improvement and revenue enhancements by hoteliers, however, foremost the lack of empirical research on this new concept.

The location of Hotel Piscis is in a destination considered pioneer in clubbing and nightlife tourism attracting the British youth. Accordingly, Hotel Piscis is highly influenced by the potential of user-generated content, its clients have a high presence and influence on social media and rely on the information found online when opting for an accommodation. Furthermore, due to the type of client targeted by PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, the hotel chain is making efforts on disposing of tour operators therefore opting for direct sales. (PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, 2017). Consequently, by improving the current deficient online reputation of the hotel it is possible to increase the bookings and boost the financial outcomes of the company.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE ADVISORY PLAN

As previously mentioned, the management problem of the company is the impact of its low online reputation on sales performance and hotel revenue due to the main target segment being highly influenced by UGC. However, from 2019 Piscis Hotel will belong to a different category of accommodation and the establishment will have the opportunity of starting its online reputation from scratch. Thus, in order to have a control over the of their customers, make use of the reviews for a higher customer satisfaction and maintaining competitiveness it is crucial to have ORM strategies set in advance.

Accordingly, the objective of the advisory part of this thesis assignment consists on translating the results of the research into an set of ORM strategies that can be applied by Hotel Piscis on how to on how to conduct ORM for their new hotel concept of a 4**** category.

The management question that the advice will be answering will be the following:

¨How can Hotel Piscis efficiently manage its online reputation as a 4**** category accommodation to effectively compete in the market of hotels in Sant Antoni, Ibiza?¨

The advisory report will have the following structure:

1. ORM strategies
2. Selection of strategy
3. Implementation plan

(1)The first part of the advisory report will provide an alternative of ORM strategies as a result of the research of interviews of experts in the field supported by extensive research of scientific publications,

journals and textbooks. (2) The second part of the advisory report will present a selection of one of the strategies according to the criterion set. (3). Finally, the advisory report will result on an implementation plan for *Hotel Piscis* on the strategy chosen.

1.4 OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The first objective of the research is to gain an insight into reputation management strategies in the hotel industry by finding out who are responsible for managing online reputation, what is the goal of ORM and how and by means of what these strategies are accomplished. The second objective of the research is to analyze a number of factors of online reputation management strategies of the compset[2] of Hotel Piscis with regards to online presence, involvement in Web 2.0, and online reviews rating with the purpose of creating a set of ORM plan for managing the online reputation of Hotel Piscis **** of *PIH* hotel chain.

Derived from the objective two central research questions have been formulated:

CRQ1: How is online reputation managed in the hotel industry?
>   SQ1: What is aimed to be accomplished with ORM in the hotel industry?
>   SQ2: Who are the responsible of managing online reputation in the hotel industry?
>   SQ3: What are tactics to manage online reputation in the hotel industry?
>   SQ4: What are tools to manage and measure online reputation in the hotel industry?

*CRQ2:What are the online reputation strategies applied by 4**** party hotels in Sant Antoni de Portmany?*
>   SQ1: What is the online presence of the compset?
>   SQ2: What is the Web 2.0 involvement of the compset?
>   SQ3: What is the current online reputation performance of the compset hotels with regards to rating scores and number of reviews?
>   SQ4: What tactics do the compset use to respond to the online reviews?

1.5 READING GUIDE

The thesis project is divided into three sections, the first section of the thesis assignment includes a general introduction of the thesis project with information about the client, the reason of the project, the description of the management problem, the objectives and formulated questions of the advisory and research part respectively, and finally a reading guide of the remaining thesis for a better comprehension of the structure followed.

Section two presents the research part of the report, starting with the theoretical framework of the core concepts supported by literature review and followed by an extensive explanation of the research methodology. Then, the results of each research are presented and a conclusion of these is provided answering the research questions. Finally, it is reflected about the reliability and validity of the research.

Section three consists of the advisory part of the thesis project. This advice is elaborated on the previous research conclusions and will provide alternative solutions for the management problems and finally the best solution to implement will be presented.

2. RESEARCH PART

This section consists on the theoretical framework of the thesis assignment which elaborates on the key concepts from the literature and the relationship among them. The approach of the field research is introduced and the results are discussed with a clear set of conclusions of the research. Moreover, a reflection on the validity and reliability of the research is provided.

The objective of the research is to get an insight on ORM management in the hotel industry, understanding the function of ORM, who are the responsible, what to gain and how to do it, and to analyze the online reputation management strategies of the compset of Piscis Hotel. All in all, to recommend PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, by means of an ORM plan, the best strategies to manage its online reputation in 2019.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
The literature review elaborates on the core concepts of the thesis and the relation among them in the research process. Desk research has been applied to get specific information about the meaning and function of these terms. The data collected through desk research is also named secondary data which consist on investigating available data collected by others.

In this theoretical framework, the key concept defined are "Online Reputation", "Web 2.0" "USG" and "Online Reputation Management", as it is essential to understand the purpose of this thesis assignment. The link between among the key concepts consists of understanding the process of Online reputation management which with the influence of Web 2.0 on online reputation and the importance of UGC, in order to justify the management of this concept and how this has an impact on the performance of a hotel establishment.

Online Reputation
The terminology of reputation has been a subject of study since 1980 by many professionals and theorists and since then it has been in a constant evolution (Marín, E., 2016). One of the most basic definitions of reputation is provided by Mateši, Vučković and Dovedan (2010) as "A reputation is how some object – institution or company – is perceived by outside or internal stakeholders."

In addition a similar definition is provided by Gotsi and Wilson (2001) as follows: "A corporate reputation is a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time. This evaluation is based on the stakeholder's direct experiences with the company, any other form of communication and symbolism that provides information about the firm's actions and/or a comparison with the actions of other leading rivals." In this definition Gotsi and Wilson emphasize the importance of competitors in the reputation of a company.

Additionally, corporate reputation has been defined as "a collective representation of a firm's past behavior and outcomes that depicts the firm's ability to render valued results to multiple stakeholders" (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000, p. 243). By this definition it is pointed up the repercussion of the performance of a company on its future image.

However, in this digital era, the term has passed many developments and change phases, where consumers and internet users express their opinions online causing a scarce of control of online interactions. Accordingly, Del Fresno (2012) defines online reputation as "Online reputation of a brand is result of what customers, former customers, future customers, employees, etc say, write and transmit to others anywhere in the social network based on their perceptions and experiences at any time of their direct or indirect relationship with the brand". Furthermore, the author makes a reflection of the differences of traditional reputation and online reputation by the following statements:

-"The main characteristic of online reputation is the value that users give to the quality of products and services, since they are the ones with the greatest power of influence in creation and distribution of reputation by means of their online reviews. Meanwhile, in traditional reputation the company has more control over the image selecting the group of interest."

-"Unlike the information that traditional media distributes about a company, in Web 2.0 the information is uncontrollable and is permanently available, so that the user can access to it any time."

- "In Web 2.0 the information can be easily found, facilitating the user the access to a large amount of UGC."

- "Traditional media offers selected information and little variety, while the information on the Internet is much richer and diverse as it comes from different sources."

- "To build the reputation of a company in a traditional manner, it takes time and effort. Traditional reputation is maintained over time, while online reputation can be ruined almost instantaneously if organizations do not have flexibility when reacting to vulnerable situations."

With this comparison made by Del Fresno (2012), it can be notably distinguished the development of corporate reputation has suffered by the introduction of Web 2.0 largely shifted by online reviews. Social Networking sites have empowered the customer. In fact, Craig (2013) mentions on a webinar about Online Reputation management that nowadays Social media is word of mouth on steroids.

Accordingly, as online reputation is the main concept for this research and based on the previously mentioned definitions and contrast between traditional and online reputation, online reputation can be defined as a valuable intangible set of judgments about a certain company or organization generated by external and internal stakeholders on the online environment, being this a consequence of the past actions of a company over time.

Web 2.0

Constantinides and Fountain (2008) state that Web 2.0 is mostly used interchangeably with the term Social Media. However they also provide a broad and comprehensive definition as: "A collection of open-source, interactive and user controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the flow of ideas and

knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing / refining of informational content."

A briefer definition is given by O'Reilly (2006) claiming "Web 2.0 is a set of economic, social, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the Internet—a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects."

Del Fresno (2012) considers Web 2.0 an important phenomenon by stating "Web 2.0 is one of the most significant a socio-technological phenomenon in the last decades in the business world." Moreover, the author also describes the term as a factor which has sped up communication skills by pointing out "Web 2.0 is presented as an accelerator of the extraordinary ability of people to share opinions, reviews and abstract ideas in a social and collective way and brings the uniqueness that evokes engenders, ways of interaction that were not possible before"

Additionally review platform sites are a category considered to be a Web 2.0 channel as Destination BC (2013) claims "social media channels are divided into two categories: review sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp, and social networking sites such as Facebook. Furthermore, another terminology for review sites in the hospitality industry is an OTA, as a study of Cornell University about the impact of Online reviews refers to online review sites as online travel agents (OTAs) naming TripAdvisor, Booking and Expedia.

From these definitions it can be concluded that term Web 2.0 in the hotel sector includes Social Media Networks and Review sites or OTAs and it can be defined as an online tool in a growing phase which facilitates the share of information and interaction between customers.

USG (User- Generated Content)

Destination BC (2013) provides a concise definition of UGC as "User-generated content is content—primarily text, photos and videos—created and shared by consumers as opposed to marketers, journalists, experts and other paid professionals (although they contribute to social networks).". A more simple perception of the term is "various forms of media content that are published by end-users" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The Interactive Advertising Bureau (2017) describes UGC as "content that is generated by individual users or peers that has the potential to create engagement and/or drive conversation.". Furthermore, IAB also makes a statement about the rapid development of this content by "Use of UGC content in marketing has grown significantly in recent years due to social media and platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TripAdvisor where "ordinary people" have become avid content creators and publishers/marketers/agencies are taking notice. Technology, largely in the form of social listening, has real-time listening and rapid activation which can lead to enhanced monetization and the ability to scale content."

Moreover, Ghosh (2012) also reflects about the relevance and spread of USC by stating "The Web is increasingly centered on contributions by its users. User-generated content (UGC) such as Amazon and Yelp reviews, Wikipedia articles, blogs, or YouTube videos now constitute a large fraction of the relevant, easily accessible content that makes the Web useful, and crowdsourcing tasks to the online public is increasingly common, ranging from systems based on unpaid contributions such as Games

with a Purpose or online Q&A forums (Y! Answers, Quora, and StackOverflow to name a few), to platforms for paid crowdsourcing such as Amazon's Mechanical Turk and TopCoder"

From these definitions it can be concluded that UGC is a term that emerged with Web 2.0 in 2005 referring to the content in form of social platforms, reviews/forums, blogs, photos or videos found and shared online about a company or institution generated by the customer.

Online Reputation Management

First of all, it is important to mention that ORM is a recent field of study that has started to emerge after the year 2005 directly right after or at the same time with the introduction of social media. (Zenebe, J.,2012)

This term is claimed to be hard to define by Beal and Strauss (2009) as it belongs to different sectors by being " a phenomenon on the cross line between marketing communications, public relations and Search engine optimization (SEO)."

While Madden and Smith (2010) see the term as a marketing tool highlighting its importance in the competitiveness of a company by stating "ORM has become one of the key tools when defining the marketing online strategy and the digital marketing plan of companies, since it is considered one of the most important asset of a company for those organizations who want to compete in the online market.".

On the other hand, Customer Alliance Resources (2016) focuses more on the recentness of the concept describing ORM as "a concept emerged within public relations, but shifted its focus towards newly emerging review sites, social media platforms and search engines."

Jones, Temperley and Lima (2009) see ORM as a process of actions by defining the term as: "On-line reputation management is the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening as the organization engages in a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various on-line stakeholders".

Additionally, Destination BC provides a clear description of the function of the management of the term as: "Monitoring and engaging on the social web to build awareness, shift impressions and strengthen business"

Furthermore, the organization also presents a set of 4 steps of the management of Online reputation consisting of:

1. Manage content
2. Listen
3. Act on Feedback
4. Respond and Engage

A similar procedure of online reputation management is provided by Nguyen, K. (2015) with the following scheme:

1. Creating a remarkable experience
2. Encourage reviews
3. Monitoring
4. Responding to reviews
5. Acting upon attained information

With regards to the first step that Destination BC purposes, monitoring, Del Fresno (2012) provides a chart with the media where online reputation can be monitored which consist of: Review sites, Blogs, Forums, Social Media, Online Media and E-commerce sites. See on Appendix II. Models.

Marín (2016) provides a set of strategies and actions that hoteliers should practice in order to perform an effective online reputation management:

1. Look after the Hotel's Website
2. Inclusion of Web 2.0 and use of Social Media
3. Encourage opinions and respond to the reviews
4. Improve the SEO and SEM positioning
5. Optimize human resources: contract a Community Manager

The key tactics proposed by Destination BC (2013) to manage Online Reputation are the following:

- Manage listings and content on key review sites and social networking sites
- Monitor and analyze customer feedback
- Act on feedback
- Respond to feedback
- Build social media communities and advocacy

Moreover, Van Noort and Willemsen (2011) suggest that companies should decide upon a strategy for when to offer webcare in online complaint management. In their study they distinguish between a reactive and proactive webcare strategy. As the authors state "With a proactive webcare strategy, the company takes on a proactive approach and responds unsolicitedly to NWOM. With a reactive webcare strategy, a company responds to NWOM only when it is explicitly asked to do so by the customer." Thus, the tactics mentioned above can be distinguished between reactive or proactive. Similarly, does Nguyen (2015) determining two types of strategies for ORM as reactive including responding and acting upon and proactive considering create remarkable experience and encourage as it can be observed in Figure II.IV in Appendix II – Models.

With these definitions, it can be concluded that they all agree on the recentness of the term of ORM and its origin from the emergence of Web 2.0. Therefore, ORM in the hotel sector can be defined as a recent phenomenon process consisting of keeping track of online feedback, opinions and reviews about the hotel establishment and its brand, employees, products and services and knowing how to react and generate content, as well as making use of the UGC to strengthen the hotel business performance and contribute to competitiveness and revenue. Furthermore, these set of tactics can be managed by means of two different strategies, reactive and proactive.

Effect of ORM on revenue

Multiple studies support the fact of managing online reputation making a positive effect on revenues of a hotel establishment. For instance a study of Cornell University about Hotel Performance Impact of Socially Engaging with Customers confirms this idea by:

"First, the study found that simply encouraging reviews (using Revinate Surveys) was associated with an increase in a hotel's ratings, as compared to their competitive set. Second, the fact that management responds to reviews leads to improved sales and revenue as measured by consumers clicking through

to the hotel's listing at online travel agents. The study re-confirmed an earlier estimate that an increase in a hotel's TripAdvisor rating is reflected in an increase in revenue."

A similar point of view has Serge Chamelian (2017), director of H-Hotelier who states:
"Online reputation management has a huge impact on the hotel's revenue per room. For instance, a one point increase in a hotel's 100-point GRI leads up to a 0.9 percent increase in price (ADR), a 0.5 percent increase in occupancy, and a 1.4 percent increase."
Additional support to this relation is a statement of Destination BC (2013) which in one of its guidelines of Online Reputation management state on of the four reasons of managing online reputation is "Reputation manages revenue".
Nguyen (2015) also confirms with her study the fact of online reputation management has an effect on a hotel business by stating "Online reviews are an important tool for consumers to make hotel purchase decision, which ultimately have an impact on hotels' sale volumes. Positive reviews bring in more business, negative reviews cost business. In addition, online reviews help improve service as hotelier can learn about guests' experience, attitude, feedback and preferences from online reviews."

Hence, various research have proved the positive correlation between managing online reputation and a higher power of pricing for bookings and therefore an financial pay off.

Based on the literature review collected, the relation between the core concepts of Online Reputation, Online Reputation Management, Web 2.0 and Revenue can be observed in the own elaborated chart below:
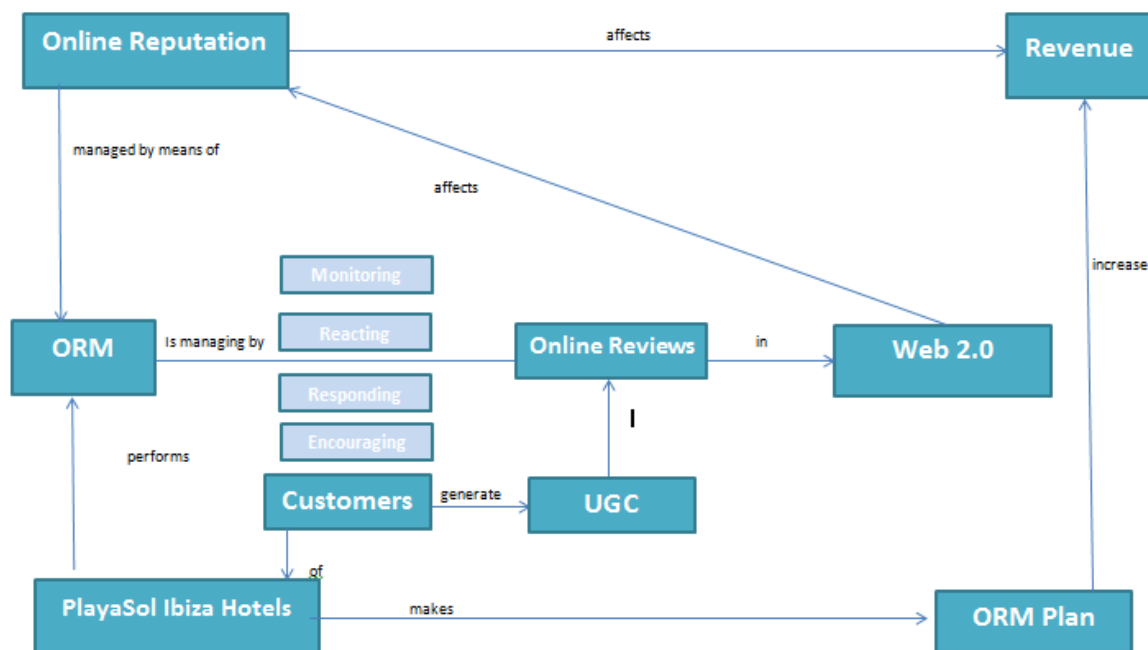

Figure 1. Relation between core concepts of the thesis project (own elaboration)

3 RESEARCH METHODS

This third part of the thesis deals with the methodology of research. As previously mentioned the project aims to develop an ORM strategy for the renewed *Hotel Piscis* belonging to the hotels of *PIH's* portfolio.

3.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

The theoretical framework already provides some basic description of the concept of ORM, however, the aim of the first part of the research is to gain an insight into ORM by means of interviews to experts in the field. Accordingly, the interviews will include specific questions regarding, the aim of ORM, resource allocation and tactics and tools to manage online reputation. Accordingly, the first research will be as follows:

CRQ1: How is online reputation managed in the hotel industry?
SQ1: What is aimed to be accomplished with ORM in the hotel industry?
SQ2: Who are the responsible of managing online reputation in the hotel industry?
SQ3: What are tactics to manage online reputation in the hotel industry?
SQ4: What are tools to manage and measure online reputation in the hotel industry?

The approach of the research starts with an insight into ORM by means of secondary data collected in journals, publications and textbooks. Additionally, in order to conduct a meaningful research analysis, qualitative research will be used by means of primary data collection to experts about ORM strategies in the hotel sector.

The methodology of data collection comprised semi-structured interviews, which allow ¨the identification of insights into an issue from the perspective of participants or end-users" as the use of open-ended, follow-up and closed interview questions, ensure a great balance on gathering qualitative, textual and focused data.(Mc Cammon,2013). Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information. There are three types of interview: in depth-interview, focused interview and survey-interview that entails more structured questions. (Yin, 2009). Accordingly, the type of interview chosen for this assignment will be focus interviews which will be conducted face to face since there will be a mixture of structured questionnaire to be able to gain profound information however still following a structure to cover all the key areas. Approaching experts in the hotel sector a through insight into ORM strategies will be obtained. This type of research is beneficial to clarify assumptions drawn from the literature research.

The sampling plan selected will be purposive sampling as in this criterion sampling the qualitative research would like to gain a specific knowledge about strategies for managing online guest reviews. As Tongco (2007) states "the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge and experience". Therefore, only experts in the field have been selected, as Brotherton (2002) states "purposive, judgmental or criterion sampling are procedures to select sample subjects on the basis of some important characteristics they possess." The experts have been chosen according to the following criteria:

- Being related to the hotel sector
- Having experienced ORM
- Having more than 3 years of working experience in the hotel sector
- Working for a company operating in the Balearic Islands

 With regards to the sample size of the qualitative research, it has been determined to interview five experts in the field. The interviewees should possess at least 3 years of working experience and the knowledge of Online Reputation Management related to the Spanish hotel sector in other to obtain a realistic and valuable perspective of the concept. As in can be observe in the table below two of the interviewees work for a Mallorcan hotel chain called RIU Hotels & Resorts, moreover, the hotel factory consulting firm and the marketing consultation agency offices were both located in the Balearic Islands and

	Related to the hotel sector	Experience ORM	Interviewee's Position	Company	Years of experience	Size of the company
Interviewee 1	Yes	Yes	Revenue and E-commerce Manager	RIU Hotels & Resorts	5 years	27,813 employees (2015)
Interviewee 2	Yes	Yes	Community Manager	RIU Hotel & Resorts	3 years	27,813 employees (2015)
Interviewee 3	Yes	Yes	Hotel Senior Consultant	The hotel factory Hotel Consulting Agency	4 years	20 employees
Interviewee 4	Yes	Yes	Hotel Consultant Junior	The hotel factory Hotel Consulting Agency	4 years	20 employees
Interviewee 5	Yes	Yes	Digital Marketing Consultant	Marketing Consultation Agency	6 years	105 Employees

Table 1. List of the respondents of the research interviews. (own elaboration)

The setting of each of the interviews is described in the transcript in appendix V, four were face to face interviews and took place in the place of work of the interviewees. One of them was done via Skype since the interviewee was in a different city than the interviewer. All of the interviews were conducted in Spanish as it was easier for the interviewee to communicate in their mother tongue; however, the transcripts were translated into English for the assignment. Two of the interviewees were already acquainted with the interviewer due to the fact that the researcher did an internship at the Hotel consulting Agency. The other interviewers were unknown; however, research has been conducted by

LinkedIn, to check their carrier experience and publications to make sure they have the sufficient expertise to contribute to the thesis. Experts working in the RIU hotel chain were reached by a contact of the interviewer. As the interviewer works in these hotel for other purposes than hospitality and was aware of the ORM efforts the accommodation practices and also its high score in online reputation review websites. Lastly, the interviewer was acquainted with the marketing consultation agency when conducting some research and consulting some journals for the hotel factory when doing the internship. These experts were contacted by email for the possibility of conducting an interview and to arrange a date and time for the interview to take place.

The name of the interviewees is not revealed to avoid conflicts within their working place since they are providing with personal experience and specific tasks they put into practice about how to handle online reputation management, for instance, with examples of the ways of answering online guests reviews. Nonetheless, in order to understand the context of the answers provided their position and company that they work for is disclosed as it can be observed in the table above.

There are four general strategies to help the researcher handle the evidence objectively to produce convincing conclusions, specifically, relying on theoretical propositions, developing a case description, using both qualitative and quantitative data, and examining rival explanation. (Yin,R., 2009).The method of data analysis of the interviews will consist of relying on theoretical propositions from the literature review collected and pattern matching with the transcripts of the interviews conducted. The theoretical framework can be seen as a proposition which facilitates the selection of useful and neglectable data. Furthermore, the researcher will identify similarities and patterns in the interviews and related to the literature review.

Regarding the transcripts, there are three types of transcripts, verbatim transcripts, edited transcripts and intelligent transcripts. (King, N. & Horrocks, C.,2010). The type of transcription method used will be edited transcript where the researcher can omit sentences without changing the sense of the recording as word to word attention is not fundamental.

The second central research question that this assignment will be carrying out will be answering the following question:

*CRQ2:What are the online reputation strategies applied by 4**** party hotels in Sant Antoni de Portmany?*

SQ1: What is the online presence of the compset?

SQ2: What is the Web 2.0 involvement of the compset?

SQ3: What is the current online reputation performance of *the compset hotels* with regards to rating scores and number of reviews?

SQ4: What tactics do the compset use to respond to the online reviews?

The approach of this part of the research will consist of a multiple-case study since different hotels are benchmarked regarding online reputation strategies, with the use of secondary data sources by means of desk research, the strategies and performance of *the compset of Hotel Piscis* on the Internet will be examined. This will consist of an exploratory research, collecting quantitative research providing information such as their online presence or Web 2.0 involvement. Desk research is the most suitable

methodology as it comprises searching for information using existing resources, such as the press, the Internet, analytical reports and statistical publications. (PMR, 2018).

Quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon. (Babbie,E.,2010) In this case, quantitative data about the online reputation of the competitive set of hotels of Hotel Piscis as a 4**** category hotel will be collected in order to anticipate the competition the renewed hotel will be confronted to and thus find out the best online reputation strategies to apply in order to compete in the market. Therefore, numerical data will be collected by means of tables to elaborate graphs and representation to ease the interpretation of results, comparision of results and findings of the data gathered. Examples of the data that will be collected would be hotel review ratings, number of media shared,number of online reviews, etc.

The sampling of this part of the research consist of cluster sampling as the research will consist of collecting quantitative data of the compset of hotels, therefore, the sample will be selected by a criterion of:

> Category: 4**** hotels
> Hotel segmentation: clubbers /party hotels
> Location: Sant Antoni de Portmany, Ibiza
> Adults oriented (Adults-Only hotels)
> Having fulfilled a brand positioning project in the past three years

This technique can be used to put together a full list of the target population elements, in this case the accommodations which represent the main competitors for Hotel Piscis. (Brotherton, B., 2002).Thus, the researcher aims to analyze the online reputation strategies of a specific group of hotels.

The criteria that the researcher applies to evaluate the data collection of this research is described in the previous section in theoretical framework, where the AAOCC criteria is explained.

3.2 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

In the following part a discussion of the results of the two researches are presented separately. First, the results of the interviews conducted to the expert are presented by answering the sub-questions of the first central question with quotes of the transcripts with a following justification. Then the results of the benchmark by means of desk research are presented also following the order of the sub-questions by means of graphs and tables with an explanation.

3.2.1 FINDINGS OF THE INTERVIEWS

The focus of this chapter is to present the results of the interviews conducted to the experts in the field of the hotel sector. The interviews were conducted to gain an insight of the best strategies for hoteliers to carry out ORM. The findings are categorized into the sub-questions in the same order that were formulated to answer the first central question.

This part presents the data collected by means of the interviews as an instrument to come up with information. Raw data does not have meaning unless the research explains it in an appropriate way. (Evans, D. & Gruba, P., 2002), accordingly, the results of the interviews are justified. Moreover, direct interview quotes are provided in this section that has been taken from the transcribed interviews, located on Appendix V.

What is aimed to be accomplished with ORM in the hotel industry?

With regards to the first sub-question, about what is the goal of ORM. The question was answered by asking the experts about their own definition of ORM and its importance in order to understand what it is aimed to gain applying online reputation management in the hotel sector.

In general, all interviewees view ORM as a key feature for increasing sales in the hotel sector as good reviews affect positively the booking decision of the customer. Many respondents indicated the association between ratings and sales volume. Interviewees explained it as follows:

> "We are a business, the goal is making revenue" (Line 49, Interviewee 2)

> "We answer all reviews but more from the sales perspective" (Line 52, Interviewee 1)

> "ORM is very important because it affects the booking decision, I would say it depends 50% on the price and 50% on the online reviews. So it affects sales." (Line 16-17, Interviewee 1)

> "The ratings affect booking decision when choosing a hotel and it also affects the price of the services, consequently the GOP" (Line 15-16, Interviewee 3)

> "All of this has an economic result. For instance, I read that 1% increase in rating has an impact in hotels on its ADR, occupation and RevPar." (Line 26-27, Interviewee 4)

> "I would define ORM as one of the key success factors in the sales for a hotel".(Line 10, Interviewee 5)

Who are the responsible of managing online reputation in the hotel industry?

Interviews indicated that the responsible managing online reputation is distributed differently depending on the characteristics of the hotel establishment and its own focus of the management given to online reputation.

Two respondents agreed on having all stuff involved in the concept, as reputation is ultimately affecting the entire hotel performance. These interviewees made a remark on the relevance of every employee being involved at the time of answering the reviews since this would also shows more credibility to the customer and the specific department mentioned will be aware of the issue and able to make any change of improvement.

For instance Interviewee 1 and 5 expressed this by:

> "Every employee of the hotel should be aware of the concept of ORM" (Line 20, Interviewee 1)

> "Some important strategies in ORM in the hotel industry are that all the staff in the hotel should be involved" (Line, 27-28, Interviewee 5)

Positions mentioned by the interviewees who could be responsible for ORM are the general manager, marketing manager, community manager, guest experience, front office manager or receptionist. One

of the respondents made a remark on the responsible of ORM task in a hotel relying on the size of the hotel as:

"In a hotel is usually is the Gest Experience Manager. Or if it is a small hotel it can be the general Manager, Front office Manager or even the receptionist. But his really depends on the hotel." (Line 19-20, Interviewee 3)

"Then also the community manager, on charge of responding to the reviews and sending emails to request reviews in all our OTA platforms. But also the revenue manager, who answers the reviews on TripAdvisor and monitors the analytics on the tool we use". (Line 23-26, Interviewee 2)

Additionally only one of the interviewees makes a remark on outsourcing, recommending to avoid this if possible as this would slow down the reaction time of the hotel to the reviews. This was expressed by Interviewee 5 as:

"In my opinion ORM is a task that should be carried out in house. That means in the hotel since the staff working in the hotel are the best to judge and take actions on the online reviews" (Line 19-20, Interviewee 5).

Similarly, another interviewee indicates that one of the tasks was managed in another city than where the hotel was located, but she wishes that this is also done from the hotel.

"In our company, one of the responsible is E-commerce who is in Barcelona and takes care of Social Media. But I hope I can assume this responsibility too someday." (Line 22-23, Interviewee 2)

What are tactics to manage online reputation in the hotel industry?

The data collected from the interviews regarding tactics to manage online reputation follows a pattern. This has been categorized into responding, monitoring, encouraging and reacting.
One of the respondents went a step further and made a distinction of two stages of the categories when carrying our online reputation management consisting on management of the reviews and management of the content of the reviews stating the following:

"I think it is divided into two. First, the management of the reviews itself and then the management of the content of the reviews. The Management of the reviews will consist of : responding to the reviews …and encouraging more reviews " (Line 34-38, Interview 3) "Then the management of the content of the reviews should be done by: monitoring the reviews, react within the company… and comparing ORM practices" (Line 42-46, Interviewee 3)

Additionally, the interviews also affirmed that ORM should be taken as a priority, stating that investment is required in this aspect by outsourcing or distributing tasks in the hotel establishment itself. This is indicated by Interview 5 stating:

"Since 2015 ORM is a priority of inversions by hotels, followed by small scale renovations, marketing and staff training". (Line 14-16, Interviewee 5)

Similarly Interview 4 supports this idea by stating:

> "A last statement would be that considering online reputation is not anymore an option but a priority. A hotel should invest in order to be competitive in the current market." (Line 65-66, Interviewee 4)

The pattern of strategies to manage online reputation in the hotel industry recommended by the interviews was the following:

Responding

The most mentioned tactic by the experts is responding to reviews. All respondents agreed on the importance of this for an effective performance of ORM.

Words that interviews use to express this opinion are the following:

> "We are very active in the topic of reviews. We answer reviews and encourage reviews. Because if you go to a hotel you want to read something about it". (Line 47-48, Interview 2)

> "I believe answering to the reviews is one of the fundamental strategies" (Line 30, Interviewee 2)

> "Responding, we use it as a weapon of sales" (Line 33, Interviewee 2)

> "Responding is one of the procedures" (Line 44, Interviewee 2)

> "Management of reviews would consist of: Responding to reviews" (Line 36, Interviewee 3)

It can be noticed that Interview 2 puts emphasis on responding to reviews, as her position of community manager.

Respondent 3 elaborates on how to respond reviews.

> "Always answer all negative reviews before 24 hours. Between 24 hours and 48 hours. Always. Try to answer to all of the reviews. But not all of them. Because it shouldn't be an automatic response like. Thanks for the review. But more personal. And another advice is to sign the reviews with the name and the position of the person answering. And in the same language of the review." (Line 27-31, Interview 3)

Similarly, states Interviewee 2 with regards to answering personally:

> "Give the feeling that that behind the computer there is a person that is interested about their lives." (Line 36, Interviewee 2)

Encourage

The second tactic that stood out was to encourage reviews. Three of the respondents remarked that ORM was present in the entire customer journey which emphasizes the importance of requesting for a review after the stay.

> "ORM is important in the hotel sector as it is constantly linked to the activities of the client. For instance, it is found in all the phases of the customer journey. It influences at all time of booking when the guest is looking for information about the accommodation, they read

reviews. Therefore, it has an effect in the decision marking of the reservation. Also after the reservation is made, the guest also can ask its doubts to the establishment. And also post-stay when the client leaves its own review" (Line 20-25, Interviewee 4)

Other interviews also share the same opinion about the importance of encouraging reviews by:

"Also requesting more reviews is important because the guest would rather book a hotel that has recent reviews then months ago" (Line 31-32, Interviewee 2)

"And we encourage reviews by sending an e-mail after the stay of the guest" (Line 47, Interviewee 1)

"Encouraging reviews should be done by sending an e-mail after the stay or during the check-out of the guest" (Line 38, Interviewee 3)

Monitor

The third important tactic mentioned when carrying out ORM in the hotel sector was monitoring the reviews. Experts remarked the importance of having a control over user generated content, to compare ratings and analyze the most mentioned and valued aspects .In addition they suggest the use of tools for monitoring:

"We monitor through our review platforms, ReviewPro, TripAdvisor, Booking and our own Website where we use Mirai."(Line 43-44, Interviewee 1)

"Monitoring the reviews should be done by means of review tools."(Line 43-44, Interviewee 4)

"It is important to measure and monitor the satisfaction of the client, identify also the key areas that need improvement and recognize the most valued aspects by the guests." (Line 39-40, Interviewee 4).

React

React or take action and make decisions was another tactic that experts mentioned to be crucial. According to the interviewees, guests can provide a wealth of information to hoteliers regarding aspects of improvement or most valued services. Therefore, reacting to the reviews within the company, by involving and informing all the staff by means of weekly meetings in order to discuss the most important reviews and together take action on these to improve the hotel performance.
Interviewee 1 claims the way in which they react to reviews in their case:

"We act every Monday. We meet every Monday and take decisions. And we read we set some criteria." (Line 28-29, Interviewee 1)

"We react to the reviews by meeting every Monday and discussing them." (Line 45, Interviewee 1)

"React within the company, making conclusions of the reviews, sharing this content with all the hotel, making changes and decisions." (Line43-44, Interviewee 3)

What are tools to manage and measure online reputation in the hotel industry?

Interviewees indicated a number of tools used nowadays to monitor online reputation including ReviewPro, TrustYou, Revinate and Customer Alliance. The tool mentioned by all of the respondents was and ReviewPro, which was defined to be a useful tool and highly used by Spanish hoteliers. Interviewee 4 provides a complete explanation of the advantages of using this too while Interviewee 5 states that the popularity of this tool in Spain.

> "And then there is ReviewPro that compares the online reputation with the competitive set. It analyzes semantically the reviews made by guests. And it offers a competitive quality index." (Line 49-50, Interviewee 4)

> "I would say the most used in Spain is ReviewPro."(Line 41, Interviewee 5)

Interview 1 makes explains how they use ReviewPro to maintain competitiveness:

> "We use ReviewPro to monitor the five hotels of the chain and also the competitive set. When you use this program you set the competitors and then you also set certain criteria that you would like to monitor about your hotel." (Line 59-61, Interviewee 1)

In addition, interview 2 mentions that the tool facilitates the management of social media:

> "We use ReviewPro which provides us a review of all the review platforms and social media. It is very complete." (Line 63, Interviewee 2)

However, they also mentioned that OTA's also offer its own analytics within their booking services.

> "and we make use of also Booking and TripAdvisor analytics" (Line 64, Interviewee 2)

> "Tripadvisor also has great analytics. We have increased our rating from 9.1 to 9.2 in one year. The reviews are growing yearly. TripAdvisor is a great tool that shows you the words with colors and sized of the most mentioned words and reviews." (Line71-73, Interviewee 1)

In addition, one of the interviewees made a statement that the choice of making use of a tool depends on the hotel size and budget.

> "This depends on the hotel size and hotel budget. There are many practical tracking tools nowadays, some of the most popular are Revinate. These costs from 50-200 euro a month accordingly to the package chosen." (Line 39-41, Interviewee 5)

According to the interviewees review platforms to measure the performance of online reputation in the hotel industry are divided into two. One of the categories is Social Media platforms from which the most mentioned have been Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

On the other hand, OTA's or booking/review platforms consisting of TripAdvisor, Booking, Orbitz, Zoover, Expedia, Trivago and Google, among others were the most mentioned during the interviews. Comparing the interviews, it was concluded that Social Media platforms differ depending on the age of the customer, review sites depend more on the nationality of the guest as Interview 4 states:

> "The main review sites nowadays are Booking, TripAdvisor, Google, and Trivago worldwide. And then for the German market HolidayCheck and the Dutch market Zoover." (Line 54-55, Interviewee 4)

> "I would say the main review site at the moment for Spanish hotel chains is Booking. (Line 53-54, Interviewee 3)

> "For instance TripAdvisor, you realize it is all elderly people. You notice this for their way of writing. It is becoming less common that young people write a review." (Line 71-73, Interviewee 2)

Booking has been mentioned to be the most reliable and most used in Spain. Furthermore, this platform has also being judged as the most trustworthy source of reviews.

> "I would say Booking.com is one of the most reliable sources of reviews since only guests that have booked can write a review" (Line46-47, Interviewee 5)

This thought is supported by Interview 2 who states:

> "Booking is a website where you can make a reservation. So once you have booked they website sends the guest a message if you would like to write a review. And those reviews can only be written if you have made a booking. It is a very active website. I spend all the time answering the questions. Therefore, I consider Booking.com one of the most important Review platforms." (Line 74-77, Interviewee 2)

> "First of all, because of most of the reservations are made through this channel as an OTA exclusive for hotels and secondly because reviews are reliable since only customers are only allowed to leave a review after the reservation has been done" (Line 53-56,Interviewee 3)

> "Booking is a very effective review platform because only the guest who has made a booking is allowed to write reviews. So is more reliable." ((Line108-109, Interviewee 1)

> "It really depends on the target group of the hotel. If it is a young guest from 15-35 years old, Instagram would be the biggest social media site. However, Facebook would suit more adults so above 25 years old." (Line 68-70, Interviewee 3)

As it can be noticed in the quotation of the transcript, interviewees also made a remark on the influence on the reliability of the reviews by being a platform exclusively focused on hotels or more business such as restaurants or destinations in general.

Additionally TripAdvisor has been questioned as a review platform from two of the interviewees.

> "Nevertheless, there are many fake reviews since everyone is allowed to share a comment regardless they have stayed or not at the hotel establishment." (Line57-58 Interviewee 3)

Besides, Interview 1makes a negative remark regarding this platform as follow:

> "We also use TripAdvisor. But this has changed in the last years. It started as an ORM but it ended up as an OTA. Nowadays they are more interested that you can sell through them. And all about reputation management they have left aside, it did not generate revenue for them." (Line 64-67, Interviewee 1)

> "I personally never read TripAdvisor when booking a hotel. I don't consider it to be an important platform." (Line 71-73, Interviewee 2)

> "No one reads TripAdvisor to decide where to stay. People look up on Google. Most of the people read the reviews on Google and then on Booking." (Line104-105, Interviewee 1)

According to the comments about TripAdvisor by the experts, it can be concluded that this platform has lost popularity and trust.

With regards to the Social Media platforms, some interviews mentioned that these were less important form a financial perspective, since they did not produce sales as booking engines.

> "And about social media we don't put that much effort since it is more a communication tool than a sales tool" (Line 79-80, Interviewee 2)

> "Social Media is not a way of selling but a communication tool. People use Social Media once they have booked." (Line 89-90, Interviewee 1)

Additionally, Interview 3 advices to be present on all of the social media:

> "But I think it is a pack, you should use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. And then you put more emphasis on one of them according to the segmentation." (Line59-62, Interviewee 4)

Two of the respondents made a remark on the tools of Instagram as a social media to engage guests:

> "Instragram is also very powerful related to sharing media, with the options of sharing stories, for instance the life within the hotel" (Line61-62, Interviewee 4)

> "Instagram has gained popularity with the Instagram stories tool which supports engagement with the client. Intragram focuses more on sharing media than written content like Facebook."(Line 71-72, Interviewee 3)

Nevertheless, the most popular platform for hoteliers was Facebook since being the one with the most users and providing an option of rating.

> "And Facebook since it is one of the most popular sites and allows the share of media such as pictures and videos but also allows giving a rating to a business." (Line 53-54, Interviewee 5)

> "Facebook offers a rating so this is one of the most important." (Line 61,Interviewee 4)

3.2.2 FINDINGS OF DESK RESEARCH

This paragraph discusses the results of the desk research; see Appendix III for the tables. The graphs shown below are related to the information in the tables in Appendix III. This section shows the different factors influencing online reputation of Hotel Piscis's compset.

Based on the criterion set, the sample of hotels chosen to belong to the compset of Hotel Piscis was the following:

1. Sol House Ibiza by Melia
2. Alua Hawaii Ibiza
3. THB Naeco Ibiza
4. AxelBeach Ibiza Suites
5. THB Ocean Beach Class

Map1. Location of hotels of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis as a 4* category hotel. (own elaboration)

The search of the following presented data has been collected the same day 17th of May 2018 in order to obtain reliable and comparable data for a coherent for the research.

A summary of the aspects analyzed in the research are presented in the table below:

Aspect	Variable	Sub-classification
Online Presence	Website	Own
		Chain
	Mobile Website	Yes/No
	App	Yes/No
	Number of videos on Website	
	Number of pictures on Website	
Web 2.0/Social Media Presence	Facebook	
	Instagram	
	Twitter	
	YouTube	
Review platforms	TripAdvisor	Rating
		Number of reviews
	Booking	Rating
		Number of reviews
	Expedia	Rating
		Number of reviews
	Trivago	Rating
		Number of reviews
	HolidayCheck	Rating
		Number of reviews
Respond and reaction practices	Time of response	
	Person responding	
	Ratio of response	

Table 2. Aspects analyzed of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis. (own elaboration)

Online Presence

The first aspect analyzed to the competitive set was the online presence of the hotels selected. This includes variables such as having an own Website or linked to the hotel chain, owning a mobile Website, an application and amount of media content shared on the Website such as videos and pictures.

As it can be observed in Graph VI.I in Appendix VI, all the hotels of the competitive set selected own a mobile Website. However, only two out of the five of them own their individual Website for their establishment, the other three have their site linked to the hotel chain's website. Furthermore, three out of the five hotels facilitate the access to information about the hotel from the mobile devices with their own application.

Furthermore, as the tourist would like to see how the hotel establishment loos like before making the decision of booking, the media content on the website tit is considered to be the most rapid way of

access to this information.(Martinez, M.,2012) Therefore, also the media content on the Website of each hotel has been analyzed with regarding the amount of pictures and videos shared on the site.

As it is illustrated in Graph VI.II in Appendix VI, Hotel Piscis owns the least content of media on its own Website without any video and only seven pictures. The most remarkable hotels is Sol House Mixed Hotel which counts with up to 73 pictures and 3 promotional videos and THB Ocean Beach class with 48 pictures and one promotional video. The remaining hotel establishments present an average of 19 pictures and at least one video on their website.

Web 2.0 involvement

The involvement of the compset on Social Media was another aspect that was researched. The Social Media platforms chosen to be the most significant for the hotel sector according to scientific publications were: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. (Marín, E., 2016)

Graph VI.III in Appendix VI shows that the most used social media is Twitter since all of the hotels selected own an account. This is followed by Facebook and Instagram with three hotels. With these social media, occurs something similar as with the Website, that the hotel does not have its own account but its content is published on the hotel chain's account. Lastly, YouTube is the social media used the least with only one of the hotels owning a YouTube account.

Review Platforms

The third aspect analyzed about the compset was their performance with regards to the user generated content shared in five of the review platforms selected to be the most effective according to the scientific publications.

Since every Review Site has its own rating scores, it has been calculated an average of rating of the five review sites. In Graph VI.IV in Appendix VI can be observed the average rating of consumers about each hotel of the five review sites selected, which are Trivago, TripAdvisor, Booking, Expedia and HolidayCheck. Hotel Piscis stands out with the lowest rating with an average of 65,4%. While THB Ocean Beach Ibiza and Alua Hawaii Ibiza with 87,3% and 85,8% respectively score the highest rating. Each rating differentiated by Review Site can be observed in Appendix VI.

The number of reviews in every review site has been calculated in each Review Site for each hotel. The graphs below, show that TripAdvisor is the review site with the most reviews with up to more than 2142 UGC created by consumers followed by Booking with a total of 1615 reviews and Trivago with 1258 reviews. Meanwhile HolidayCheck does not count with more than 400 reviews and Expedia does not reach the 180 reviews.

The hotel with the most reviews from all the review platforms is Hotel Alua Hawaii Ibiza with up to 2142 reviews on TripAdvisor. This is followed by Hotel Piscis with 1615 Reviews on Booking and 1258 on Trivago. As it can be noticed, Trivago is not in the graphs since this review platform does not offer the option of leaving a comment but only the rating.

Responding to reviews

For research of this aspect, as every review platform has its own review section it was decided to focus on only the reviews platform. This Review Site was chosen as it is one that allows the hotel to respond and it was chosen to be one of the most relevant and influential review platforms during the booking process in the hotel sector based on literature research and previous studies.

Time and ratio of response to reviews

To measure the time that the hotel takes to respond to the reviews, it was taken the timeframe of March–May 2018 in all languages and it was calculated the time taken for the hoteliers to respond to the review of the guests in the review site since the was posted by the guest.

	SolHouse Ibiza by Melia	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Beach	AxelBeach Hotel Ibiza	THB Ocean Beach Ibiza	Hotel Piscis
Average time of response	Within 1 day	Within 2 days	n/a	Within 1 day	Within 1 day	Within 3 days
ratio of response	100%	98%	n/a	98%	98%	100%

Table3. Results on research of review response behavior of Hotel Piscis' compset hotels on Tripadvisor.

As it can be noticed in the table above, all hotels of the compset have a rapid response to the reviews on TripAdvisor. The hotels respond on average within one day. Additionally, all reviews either negative or positive.

	SolHouse Ibiza by Melia	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Beach	AxelBeach Hotel Ibiza	THB Ocean Beach Ibiza	Hotel Piscis
Position of person responding	Guest Relations Manager General Manager Sales Manager	Public Relations Manager	n/a	Hotel General Manager	Hotel General Manager	Hotel General Manager

Table 4. Person answering reviews on TripAdvisor of Hotel Piscis' compset hotels.

With regards to the indication of the name and title of the person responding the reviews, in most of the hotels it is indicated that the Hotel General Manager is answering the reviews after the name. However, Sol House Ibiza by Meliá has multiple responsible responding to the reviews according to the content of the review. For instance, in the last reviews analyzed these have been answered by the Guest Relations Manager, Hotel General Manager or Sales Manager.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In this section the answers to the two central questions are presented based on the findings given in the previous section.

3.3.1 RESEARCH 1 – INTERVIEWS & LITERATURE REVIEW

The first central research question aims on gaining an insight in the management of online reputation by hoteliers understanding the goal of online reputation management, the responsible of the tasks of ORM,tactics to carry out ORM and the best tools and platforms to use to measure the performance. The collection of this data has been done by means of interviews which have been supported by literature review.

Accordingly, this research aims to answer the following central question:

How is online reputation managed in the hotel industry?

As every business nowadays, revenue is the main purpose of taking actions on ORM, as all of the respondents agree on this matter when defining ORM and its importance. This statement is supported by theoretical framework for instance by Nguyen (2015) who confirms with proof that online reviews have an effect on the hotel business and on the purchase decision. Similarly does a study of Cornell University carried out by Anderson and Han (2016) which reaffirms the fact of an increase of rating is reflected in an increase in revenue carrying out an study on TripAdvisor. Furthermore, Destination BC (2013) holds the same idea stating that "reputation drives revenue" indicating there is a direct relationship between online reputation, demand and pricing power. To conclude, online reviews can derive to an increase of sales if hoteliers are aware of the relevance and impact of ORM.

Concerning the responsible carrying out the tasks of ORM can differ on the size of the hotel establishment and the management of the hotel. However, based on the findings in most of the cases the positions of the staff appointed to be in charge of this task are: General Managers, Community Manager, Guest Experience Manager, Sales and Marketing Manager, Revenue Manager, Front Office Manager or receptionist. Marín,E. (2016) recommends to contract a Community Manager to manage the image of the company in the different platforms and it states the three different types that exists, Junior Community Manager, Senior community Manager and Social Community Manager.

According to the interviewees, regardless if there if a person appointed to carry out the task, all staff members of the hotel should be involved in the management of online reputation as reviews written can concern any department. This idea is supported by Destination BC (2013) who states: "Regardless of individual roles and responsibilities, managing reputation should be a team effort." and "To be successful, your program must involve the commitment and cooperation of all employees, from frontline staff to executive management".

In addition, experts recommend to carry out ORM tasks in-house and not opting for outsourcing these kind of services. Nguyen, K.(2015) confirms these findings by stating in her own study of interviews to multiple general managers who carry out this tasks by themselves. In doing so, actions can be taken immediately to ensure the best service possible. Moreover, a Cornell University study confirms in a study using the review platform TripAdvisor that the purchase decision of a consumer to a hotel will be higher to a hotel establishment where the general manager answers the reviews himself. (Zhang, J & Verma, R., 2017)

Tactics of ORM

According to the interviews carried out and contrasted with the theoretical framework about ORM there was a pattern of tactics found out. Therefore, it can be concluded the ORM strategy comprises of:

1. Responding
2. Encouraging
3. Reacting
4. Monitoring

Additionally, based on the theoretical framework, the above mentioned ORM tactics to manage online reputation can be distinguished between reactive and proactive strategies. Being responding and reacting a reactive strategy, and encouraging and monitoring a proactive strategy.

These tactics concur with the pattern with the models found out in literature review. For instance, it follows almost the same scheme proposed by Nguyen (2015) which can be observed in Appendix II.:

1. Creating remarkable guest experience
2. Encourage
3. Monitor
4. Responding and active upon

Furthermore, Zenebe (2012) formulates a resembling model of ORM tactics by "listening, participating, measuring and responding"

Additionally, Destination BC (2013) also matches with the pattern of ORM tactics by advising the following tactics to strengthen a company's online reputation:

1. Managing Listing and Content
2. Monitoring Activity and Measuring Performance
3. Acting on Feedback
4. Responding to Reviews and Social Media Commentary
5. Building Community and Advocacy

Another finding in the interviews was going deeper into one of the strategies responding to reviews, respondents set a number of recommendations on these as follows:

- Responding quickly
- In a personal manner
- In the language of the guest
- Signing the reviews with the position of the respondent

In fact these tactic of responding to reviews concur with the guidelines for responding to negative reviews proposed by Nguyen, K.(2015):

"• Proper language

• Honesty

• Indication of name and title of the person who answers the review

• Gathering information before answering the review

• Proper attitude e.g. unbiased and non-judgmental mind-set, being a good listener etc.

- If the person in charge of ORM is not the general manager, then sometimes the responses need to be approved by the senior manager."

<mark>Tools to manage Online Reputation</mark>

With regards to review management tools specialized in online reputation management for hotels, interviewees presented a noticeable preference towards ReviewPro, due to its worldwide popularity and its convenience of gathering and summarizing all data from multiple review sites, followed by TrustYou and Revinate. Additionally, all interviewees mentioned that review platforms also offered its own analytics which did not make it necessary to utilize other tools.

These two findings are supported by Destination BC (2013) stating ¨ReviewPro, Revinate and TrustYou are three tools that specialize in online reputation management for hotels and restaurants." and "Most social channels, including TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google + and YouTube, offer free basic monitoring, managing and analytics features" Nguyen, K.(2015) also agrees with the same tools specialized in the hotel sector. "Companies that provide monitoring tools for hotels are: ReviewPro, TrustYou, Olery and Revinate".

Moreover, there was a remark that the choice of managing online reputation by means of review management tools can vary due to the budget of the hotel establishment.

A conclusion from the interviews regarding platforms to measure the performance of online reputation management is that these are distinguished into two categories: Social Media Platforms and Review Platforms. This theory is supported by Destination BC (2013) claiming "Social media can be divided into two main categories: review sites and social networking sites. When it comes to reputation, review sites are the first priority. They drive direct business and provide invaluable customer feedback." Nevertheless, two respondents see Social Media as a communication channel, thus claiming not putting that much effort on these platforms. This matter is clarified by Destination BC (2013) stating "It is not easy to draw a direct line between activity on social networking sites and booking as it is with review site. However, social networking sites are increasingly popular with travellers who enjoy sharing experiences and making recommendations. They can also be effective marketing tools to build awareness and are important channels for engaging communities". This explains that Social Networking supports more the strategy of encouraging reviews rather than responding.

The review platforms found to be most effective and practical based on the results of the interview was Booking.com due to its reliability and being an OTA exclusively for hotels. Nevertheless, TripAdvisor is the Review Site considered to be the most popular by all literature review researched. For example, Destination BC (2013) includes TripAdvisor as the most important review sites stating" While TripAdvisor, Google Places and Yelp are the three most important review sites for travel businesses". "TripAdvisor launched in 2001 and has since become the most-visited travel site in the world, with 260 million unique visitors per month. For travel businesses TripAdvisor is undoubtedly the most important website." The same belief holds Nguyen (2015) considering TripAdvisor the most popular review platform.

Based on the expert's opinion, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the most effective social Media platforms for hoteliers to manage. Destination BC (2013) mentions Facebook, Google + and Twitter as the most popular Social Media platforms for the travel industry. Marín, (2016) shares the same opinion selecting Facebook, Twitter, Instagram for her Web 2.0 involvement study of hotels in Murcia, however, also including YouTube. Nguyen (2015) suggest to hoteliers to monitor reviews on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Another last conclusion regarding choosing the most effective platform for a hotel to monitor its online reputation relies on the segmentation. Besides, interviewees affirm that the activity of the customers on these platforms heavily depends on the nationality and the range of age, thus hoteliers should focus their efforts on the platforms that match their target group.

3.3.2 RESEARCH 2 – DESK RESEARCH

The approach of the second central question consist on analyzing the current online reputation management strategies of the compset of Hotel Piscis Hotel as a 4**** category hotel specifically for the location of Sant Antoni. This collection of the research has been carried by desk research, gathering information such as online presence, web 2.0 involvements, ratings, numbers of reviews and ways of responding to reviews.

What are the online reputation strategies applied by 4** party hotels in Sant Antoni de Portmany, Ibiza?**

After having analyzed the different current strategies of the most competitive hotels present for Hotel Piscis as a 4* category hotel in the location of Sant Antoni de Portmany it was found out the following. First of all, all of the hotel establishments from the compset selected score above an average 80% rating on the five review platforms chosen. With THB Ocean Beach Ibiza and Alua Hawaii Ibiza with an average of rating of 87,3% and 85,8% respectively. With respect to the number of reviews, most of the reviews are written through TripAdvisor and Booking.

Secondly, with regards to online presence it was found out that all of the hotels are active on mobile applications to offer their services. Only few of them count with their individual website, however, it was found a relationship that the ones that had used the hotels chain website did own an application. Meanwhile the ones owning an individual Website did not have an application. Moreover, all the websites either linked to the hotel chain or own had their page optimized for mobile devices. With regards to quantity of media on the site, all of the hotels are active sharing media, with above 18 pictures and all of them have at least one promotional video of the establishment.

Answering the third sub-research question, about Web 2.0 strategies it can be concluded that the Social Media where the hotel establishments are mostly present are Twitter and Facebook.

Finally, concerning the approaches of responding and reacting of the reviews by the compset it was observed that there is a rapid response of the hotel establishment; most of the reviews are answered within 24 hours. Additionally, all of the reviews are responded with an average ratio above 98%. Lastly, reviews are mostly signed by the Hotel General Manager. However, there has been an exception of Sol House Ibiza by Meliá, whose reviews are responded personally by every employee responsible of the department that the review has been written about.

3.4 RESEARCH DISCUSSION

This section of the thesis assignment discusses the validity and reliability of the research conducted. The three types of validity are presented – Construct Validity, Internal Validity and External Validity. Finally, the reliability of the research is presented.

The construct validity refers to how well the measurement instrument actually measures the "truth" and is according to the theoretical meaning of the concept studied (Brotherton, B., 2008). Several literatures from scientific publications and journals have been studied to come up with the key concepts of the thesis assignment which were described in the theoretical framework. These were assessed with the AAOCC criteria to increase the reliability of the research.

With regards to the primary data, the interviews, the interview guide has been elaborated based on literature and results from desk research, also questions from previous studies on ORM have been used as examples for the interview. Taking this into consideration that the questions were formulated strictly based on created framework of the concept of ORM after extensive literature research, this affirms that the validity of the research is high as there is proof that patterns concur.

The secondary data collected in desk research about the compset hotels of Hotel Piscis was based on different models found in the literature review. Thus, the benchmark practices information collected for comparison has been based on two previous studies. Taking this into consideration, it can be stated that this might decrease the validity of the research. Despite this, the studies used have been tested with the AAOCC criteria.

Internal Validity refers whether the field research can be believed and if the result is authentic and credible (Brotherton, B., 2008). With regards to the internal validity of the thesis, both the elaboration of the interview guide for the collection of primary data and the raw table used to collect the secondary data by desk research were based on the research questions. In addition, the research questions were formulated based on the theoretical framework which resulted from the management problem of the company. Thus, this relationship clarifies the validity of the research.

External validity indicates to what extent the results of the study apply to the entire population (Verhoeven, 2011). With regards to the gathering of primary data, gaining an insight into ORM through the interviews, the data collected can be applied to the any business in the hotel sector.

In addition, external validity of this research is high the research applies purposive sampling. In other words, the samples or interviewees must fit a certain criterion in order to be able to obtain reliable data for the research. Moreover, they not only meet the requirements but also have different positions in the hotel sector, those provide different perspectives from the concept. ==Despite the names remaining anonymous, their position and type of company that the experts work for are mentioned in Table 1 found in the research methodology section in order to understand the context in which the questions were answered.==

With regards to the secondary data collected by means of desk research about the compset, also purposive sample was applied, as the hotels selected had to meet a certain criteria to be considered to the compset of Hotel Piscis, thus be valid for the research.

The reliability of the research refers how the researches lead to the same result even when it will be carried out under different circumstances, at some other point in time (Verhoeven, N., 2010). In other

words, if another researcher conducting the same study with the same research methodology would be able to obtain the same results. The entire methodology of the research is transparent, as the research methodology is thoroughly presented with regards to sample, data collection and data analysis making it a reliable research.

Additionally, to avoid participant bias, the name of the interviewees stays confidential in order to obtain well-grounded data as participants speaking more comfortable and straightforward and do not implicate the expert at their place of work by sharing their online reputation practices. Finally, in order to proof that the face-to-face interviews took place these were recorded and transcribed, thus direct quotations from the interviews are provided in the results of the research.

The data collected for the qualitative research was done by literature review and interviews. The desk research was carried out by means literature review and raw tables of data collection based on the literature. With regards to the primary data collected by means of the interviews, these could be applied to another research on ORM in the hotel sector. However, this concept is new and it is developing at a rapid speed, therefore, the reliability of the information might be valid only for a certain period until upcoming trends emerge.

In addition, with regards to the secondary data collected by means of raw tables for the benchmark, this data is online reliable for a certain period of time since user generate content is constantly being created thus data changes. For instance, the rating of a hotel can increase or decrease after some time or media can be uploaded or deleted. Thus, changing the results of the information collected. Accordingly, this secondary data is only reliable for a short period of time. Nonetheless, the researcher made sure to collect all the data on the same day, thus the information is reliable and comparable to that certain period of time.

4 ADVISORY PART

In the last chapter of the thesis report an answer will be given to the advice question of the thesis assignment "How can Hotel Piscis efficiently manage its online reputation as a 4**** category accommodation to effectively compete in the market of hotels in Sant Antoni, Ibiza?¨derived from the research based on the interpretation of the results from the interviews and desk research. Research 1 provided an insight into the best ORM tactics to manage online reputation based on interviews conducted to experts in the hotel field supported by literature review. Research 2 presented the current ORM strategies of Hotel Piscis competitive set as a 4**** category hotel in the location of Sant Antoni, Ibiza.

4.1 INTRODUCTION OF ADVICE

This section of the thesis assignment is the end result of the thesis project, therefore, the part with the major importance for the client, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels. The objective of this part of the thesis assignment consists on providing a solution to the management problem of Hotel Piscis on having a low online reputation, thus, translating the results of the research into a ORM strategy that can be applied by Hotel Piscis to effectively manage online reputation as a 4**** category accommodation. Accordingly, the researcher connects the findings of the first and second central research questions, formulates a set of alternative ORM strategies, evaluates the most suitable strategy for Hotel Piscis based on a criterion and lastly and suggests an implementation plan of the most suitable strategy chosen by means of the PDCA cycle.

Supported by the theoretical framework, in the conclusions of the interviews carried out for the research it was confirmed the importance of applying ORM in the hotel sector and the relationship of reputation and revenue has been proved. Additionally, it was found out that the ORM approaches should be carried out in house and that a person should be assigned for the ORM tasks. These findings have been taken into consideration for the elaboration of alternative strategies.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS/STRATEGIES

In this part of the advisory report, a set of the ORM alternative strategies to be implemented by Hotel Piscis to effectively manage its online reputation are presented. The focus area of the strategic objective of PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels is the financial growth as every business. As online reputation has been proved to drive the revenue of hotels, it is crucial for the hotel chain to have a strategy in advance for this to influence positively the sales of the accommodation as a renovated 4**** hotel.

The ORM tactics that were concluded from the research conducted by means of the interview to experts supported by scientific publications and journals were the following: responding, encouraging, reacting and monitoring. Furthermore, these ORM tactics are distinguished into proactive and reactive strategies depending on the actions taken. Moreover, another finding of the research carried out was that these ORM tactics can be managed by certain tools like OTAs, monitoring tools or Social Media. This can be observed in Appendix II, Figure VII. Additionally, these alternative strategies have been also formulated according to the current ORM strategies applied by 4**** hotels in Sant Antoni de Portmany in order to effectively compete in the market.

For the client, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, the leading ORM strategy should consist of a proactive strategy as the online reputation of Piscis Hotel will start over and online review content will be required. Therefore, as the first step is creating USG, engaging the guest to produce feedback is one of the tactics that the client should begin with. Accordingly, encouraging should be a tactic that the client should take into consideration by enhancing reviews from the guests. Once this material has been obtained, then the proactive tactic of monitoring should be applied to evaluate the online reviews produced. This is followed by the reactive strategy of responding with promptly and professional answers to the reviews. Finally, the ORM tactic of reacting within the hotel to these comments to ensure a high customer satisfaction comes into play.

Based on the research conclusions and the objective of Hotel Piscis, the strategies proposed for PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels on how effectively manage its online reputation as a 4**** category accommodation in the area of Sant Antoni, Ibiza are the following:

STRATEGY 1 – Encouraging and responding reviews via Booking.com

The first strategy proposed is encouraging and responding reviews. The reasoning for this strategy is the management problem, being the reason of the thesis assignment as Hotel Piscis scores the lowest online reputation rating compared to its competitors. In order to prevent this to occur again with the renovated establishment in 2019, encouraging and responding reviews guidelines should be followed by an appropriated responsible assigned to perform this task on a suitable Online Review Site for Hotel Piscis. Given the proof of the importance of this strategy as all experts interviewed stated this tactic while asking how to effectively carry out ORM, the idea behind this strategy is encouraging and responding adequately to the consumer's online reviews. Moreover, the shift of the hotel from a 2** to a 4**** category does embrace the fact of offering a better service to the customer showing more interest in their needs and wishes as the guest will be paying a higher price for a better quality service and product.

As one of the findings of the research conducted, in order to have online reviews to respond, reviews need to be likewise fostered by hoteliers. Therefore, a guideline has been created in order to encourage UGC as follows:

- Solicit reviews (for example, at check-out or via post-stay emails)
- Facilitate the guest the manner of writing reviews (for example, attach a flyer/card at check-out the link of the review platform on the e-mail)
- Be tolerant on the feedback, ask for negative and positive reviews

Once online review content has been obtained, the act of responding to reviews comes into play regardless if the comment is positive or negative to show the customer that is being listened. This is an opportunity to change the impression of the hotel and convince the guest to do the booking. Numerous studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between online reputation and the number of reviews to the hotel performances associated to price, occupancy and total revenue.

Every business has a different approach of responding to reviews, thus the guidelines of this would be based on the ORM strategies of the competitive set of Piscis Hotel as a 4**** category accommodation, however, supported by the experts recommendations and the literature review selected. The guideline of responding to online reviews involves:

- Reviews should be responded rapidly, ideally within 24 hours
- Always show gratitude on the reviews written, value the time and effort of the guest

- All reviews should be answered personally and in a professional and positive manner
- Position and name of the respondents should be added in the response, ideally by the General Manager.
- Responses should be written in the same language of the review
- Negative responses should have priority for response

These set of guidelines are supported by the results of the compset of Hotel Piscis. As the rate of response was over 98%, reviews were answered within 24 hours and one of the hotels, SolHouse Ibiza by Meliá hotel used the tactic of answering the reviews according to the department that the review was aimed to, which was supported by journals about ORM in Spanish hotel chains and two of the interviewees conducted by stating that Meliá Hotels belongs to one of the hotel chains with the best strategies on ORM at the moment by mentioning the example of their customized online reviews response strategy.

In order for these guidelines to be followed, a person should be appointed for this task. Interviewees and literature review recommend carrying out all ORM in-house, accordingly a person within the hotel will be responsible to conduct the response of the reviews. Additionally, founded by the research, the position of this person will be a Community Manager.

With regards to the instrument used to perform this strategy, a tool for responding to reviews should be established. Booking.com is the review site that is recommended to focus the efforts on responding since it was considered the most reliable and popular OTA due to the exclusiveness of their booking services for hotels and only allowing guests that have made a reservation to write content on the review section by all of the interviewees in the research.

Furthermore, another factor supporting focusing the responses and encouragement of reviews on Booking.com is the profile of the customer attracted. As the party segmentation has a preference for online booking tools, thus, are more susceptible to be influenced by the online reviews read during the booking process. Additionally, the fact that PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels will be focusing its sales on direct sales or online booking rather than with touroperators is another reason which supports this strategy of encouraging and responding online reviews on Booking.com.

STRATEGY 2 – Introducing booking via Facebook

Another strategy that Hotel Piscis is recommended to implement in its ORM is introducing sales via the biggest social Network, Facebook. This was an idea originated from interviewee 1, who mentioned as an example a hotel in Palma de Mallorca that was following this strategy and the fact of seeing social media just as a communication tool.

> "The Hotel BCM Rock which is an accommodation for a young target where all its sales strategies were focused on Facebook. Since you entered the hotel you had to use Facebook, to do the check-in." (Line 33-35, Interviewee 1)

In fact this strategy would match the customer of Piscis, as being a young customer looking forward to sharing what they are doing on Social Media. Furthermore, also the Social Media Platform is aligned with the target group of the hotel establishment as one of the interviewees claimed Facebook to be an acclaimed Social Media for users between 25 and 34 years old.

Putting ORM efforts on this Social Media is not only supported by the fact that Facebook is the most popular social network for the hotel sector, but also the most useful platform as it offers the option of rating and share written opinions and media such as pictures and videos.

Additionally, this strategy would face one the findings of the research of Social Media platforms being only a communication channel and not requiring significant ORM efforts as on OTA's or Review Platforms. Therefore, since this tool would be used for sales, it would contribute to the end objective of every business, generating revenue.

Moreover, this would be an innovation in the market since none of the competitors of Hotel Piscis as a 4**** category hotel in the area of Sant Antoni, Ibiza applies approach in their sales strategy.

STRATEGY 3 – Monitoring online reviews via ReviewPro

Monitoring by means of review tools is the third strategy suggested. This arises as monitoring is one of the tactics mentioned by all models found on the literature review used and supported by the answer of the interviewees, accordingly as one of the patterns in the findings of the research.

By monitoring the activity of the guest, it can be found out customer's preferences, points of improvement of the services and products, competitors and an opportunity of attracting more customers.

Due to the amount of USG, monitoring can be a time consuming and resilient task, thus it is advised to make use of Online Review Management tools; accordingly a system to track reviews should be established. Based on the research of the interviewees supported by scientific publications, the most popular and complete Online Review Management tools at the moment are ReviewPro and Revinate. These tools facilitate hoteliers the task of keeping track of USC, allow administering different social media networks and review sites from one single platform and additionally offers analytic tools to measure and benchmark review and social media platforms.

Moreover, these tools will also facilitate the tasks of the Community Manager by providing them with favorable analytics thus, saving time to focus their efforts on the responding adequately to the reviews.

Despite monitoring would be carried out by tools, there should be a person within the hotel designated o manage the content and results of the tools. As concluded from the interviews conducted, this would depend on the size and business structure of the hotel. Moreover, as the information monitored will concern all departments of the hotel, it is important that all the team is assembled when discussing the results of the reviews to take actions within the hotel establishment.

This strategy would contribute on efficiently managing the online reputation of Hotel Piscis, thus strengthening the image of the hotel on the platforms, strengthening the online reputation and consequently increasing sales volume.

Linking the strategies purposed in the previous paragraphs to the theoretical framework conceptualized in Appendix III, it can be concluded the following:

Strategy	Type of strategy	Tactic	Tool
1Encouraging and responding to online reviews on Booking.com	Proactive & Reactive	Respond and encourage	Online Booking Platform: Booking.com
2 Introducing booking on Facebook	–	–	Social Media Platform: Facebook
3 Monitoring online reviews via ReviewPro	Proactive	Monitoring	Online Review Monitoring Tool

Table 6. Strategies linked to the conceptualization of the theoretical framework.

As it can be observed two types of strategies have been advice. Strategy 2 did not fit with any of the types of strategies since it is an innovative way of sales. Nonetheless, it is related to the purpose of the

assignment as it is a manner to increase the competitive skills of the hotel by using social media as a tool of sales, and thus not seeing it only as a communication tool.

4.3 CRITERION

To select the most suitable advice for this thesis project, a criterion has been formulated to evaluate the strategies proposed. This criterion consists of objective of the advice, time, financial costs, and resources.

Objective of the advice

The objective of the advice for Hotel Piscis is to manage effectively its online reputation as a 4**** category hotel to compete in the market of Sant Antoni, Ibiza. The fact that Hotel Piscis currently scores the lowest online reputation does not only influence its image but also the sales. Accordingly, starting over as a higher category accommodation, the establishment will have the opportunity of successfully manage its online reputation from the beginning. This will ensure the accommodation with a control of their customer's opinion, making use of online reviews for a higher customer satisfaction, increasing bookings, maintaining competitiveness and thus leading to an increase in revenue, the aim of the client.

The first and third strategy are fully formulated in line with the objective of the client. These are proactive actions of ORM by following the patterns of ORM tactics concluded from the interview research and theoretical framework to manage reputation in an effective manner. On the other hand, despite strategy 3 has more focus on the revenue and innovation of sales, it still meet the objective of competitiveness being a new idea in the market. Furthermore, the three strategies meet the requirement of improving the service to a more demanding client as increasing the category from a 2** to a 4**** accommodation and ensuring a higher customer satisfaction.

Financial costs

PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, counts with sufficient financial investment as it is in a growing economic situation with cero debts, expanding its capital and developing multiple renovation projects with their hotel establishments.(the hotel factory, 2017). Moreover, experts of the interviews and journals on ORM confirm that nowadays investment in ORM is a priority of inversion by hotels, followed by small scale renovations, marketing and staff training. Financial implications of the strategies proposed are associated mainly to FTE costs. "The average salary for an Online Community Manager is €20,505 gross per year" (Payscale,2018). Software fees and technology equipment investment are additional costs of the strategies proposed. For the first strategy the costs would be coming from the salary of hiring a new employee for the position of Community Manager. For the second strategy, the costs would also be the salary of a new employee to be responsible of this task of managing Facebook bookings; nonetheless, the software of implementing this new manner of booking through a social network would be free of costs. Lastly, the third strategy would include the salary costs of a person responsible of the task and the fee of the monitoring tool chosen. According to one of the interviewees, a full service pack for hotel reputation management on ReviewPro monitoring tool has a monthly fee of €200,00.

Considering the costs, in the table below the expected costs for each of the strategies have been calculated.

	Labour costs	Resource Investment	Social media costs
Strategy 1	€20,267/yr Community Manager Salary	€ 600,00 Computer	€ 00,00
Strategy 2	€20,267/yr Community Manager Salary	€ 600,00 Computer	€ 00,00
Strategy 3	€20,267/yr Community Manager Salary	€ 600,00 Computer € 200,00/ month ReviewPro fee	€ 00,00

Table 7. Overview of expected costs per strategy. (own elaboration)

Costs	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
Strategy 1	Encouraging and responding to reviews via Booking.com						
Salary Community Manager	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600
Computer	€ 600,00	–	–	–	–	–	–
Strategy 2	Introducing Booking via Facebook						
Salary Community Manager	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600
Computer	€ 600,00	–	–	–	–	–	
Strategy 3	Monitoring online reviews via ReviewPro						
Salary Community Manager	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600	€1,600
Computer	€ 600,00	–	–	–	–	–	–
Software	€ 200,00	€ 200,00	€ 200,00	€ 200,00	€ 200,00	€ 200,00	€ 200,00

Table 8. Expected monthly costs for the season

Time

With regards to time, it is important that the strategies can be completed in a short period of time since the renovation projects of Hotel Piscis which will reform the low category hotel to a 4**** star accommodation will take place in Winter 2019. Thus, there is a time frame settled to accomplish these alternatives. For the first and third strategy, the time frame can be met since the search for a

Community Manager can be done quickly; the implementation of the strategy is continuous while running the business. For the second strategy the search for a responsible on managing the sales on Facebook could take longer since being an innovative idea there are not many professionals aware of this practice, thus this might require extra time for training preparation for the staff hired. In addition, the person should be prepared and trained before the hotel starts operating.

Resources

Resource is a criterion which can vary depending on every strategy. For the first strategy would include the technology resources with regards to equipment, such a computer for the Community Manager to carry out the tasks involved in responding and reacting to online reviews of guests since the work is mainly online. With regards to the review platform, Booking.com, Piscis Hotel is already running its booking with this OTA, thus it would not result on the acquisition of additional software resources. Furthermore, for the second strategy the acquisition of Facebook booking software will be required. Lastly, for the implementation of the third strategy it would be similar as the first with regards to technology resources and the purchase of a monitoring tool, in this case ReviewPro with monthly costs.

4.3.1   CRITERIA OF EVALUATION

The following table shows the strategies proposed based on the criteria previously explained. From each criterion a value from 1-3 was scored where 1 is bad reason, 2 medium reason and 3 good reason, therefore, the principle is founded on the sense of the strategy. The strategy with the highest score will be chosen as the most appropriate alternative for the advice of this thesis project.

CRITERIA	STRATEGY 1	STRATEGY 2	STRATEGY 3
Objective of the advice	3	2	3
Time	3	2	2
Resources	3	2	2
Financial costs	2	3	2
TOTAL	11	9	9

Table9 . Evaluation of strategies according to the criteria set. (own elaboration)

4.3.2   RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT

Based on the results of the table above it can be concluded that the most appropriate strategy for Hotel Piscis at the moment is strategy 1 as it is the alternative that scored the highest with regards to meeting the objective, time frame, financial costs and resources compared to the other alternatives. Strategy 1 would be the first tactic towards an effective ORM of Hotel Piscis consisting of a proactive and reactive approach. This strategy will meet the objective due to the positive relationship between online reputation and the number of reviews to the hotel performances associated to price, occupancy and total revenue by means of generating UGC and adequately responding to online reviews based on guidelines. Furthermore, it will meet the timeframe as the efforts are only assigning a Community Manager and purchasing a computer device for the employee responsible for the task.

Additionally, the financial costs consist only of the salary of the Community Manager and the purchase of a computer device. Finally, with regards to resources, the hotel chain already operates with Booking.com thus the software and system is already owned as Hotel Piscis already operates its bookings with this OTA.

Online reviews on hotel business are an important tool for the purchase decision of consumers causing a significant impact on sales. By being aware of what is being said about the hotel establishment it is possible for the hotel to improve the service quality, enhancing the perceived value, obtaining a greater satisfaction, causing positive online review consequently, cause a positive impact on sales. (Nguyen,2015)

As earlier discussed in the assignment, by carrying out an effective management of the online reputation by encouraging and responding to online reviews of a hotel establishment leads to a number of benefits interconnected with the end result of an increase in revenue.

Based on Cornell University studies, benefits of implementing strategy 1 can result in the following:

- Increasing number of positive reviews by 30% can
- increase the average review score on Booking.com by 1% which can lead to
- an increase in the price per room 0,89% leading to a
- increase in occupancy by 0,54 and an
- increase by 1,42% in RevPAR

Moreover, statistics of Travelocity confirm that increasing the review score of a hotel by 1 point to a 5-point scale can increase its price by 11,2%. Translating these percentages into numbers by increasing the score of Booking.com by 2 points as its scale is from 1-10, therefore, from 6 to 8 it can increase the average price per room of 4**** hotels in San Antoni from €160,00 up to €177,92.(Booking.com,2018).

In fact, by increasing the total revenue of the hotel this would cover the additional costs of the investment of implementing the strategy and generating an extra profit.

4.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF ADVICE

A suggestion of the selected strategy to implement is developed with the necessary steps. This is presented with the support of the PDCA cycle. An overview of the PDCA cycle can be found in Appendix V.Furthemore in Appendix II Figure VII shows and overview of the ORM strategies, tactics and possible tools to clarify the selection of tool depending on the ORM tactic applied.

PLAN

In order to begin with the implementation of strategy 1, the resources and investment needed must be clarified. Previously in the description of the strategy it was stated the resources necessary consisting of: technological equipment including a computer and the additional FTE which will be the Community Manager appointed for the task concerning answering and encouraging online reviews on the different platforms focusing the efforts on Booking.com. It is important that the strategy reaches the goals established stated in the DO section

DO

The chosen strategy is the most suitable due to its relevance in ORM strategies as being one of the tactics mentioned as one of the most important by the interviews conducted to the experts and supported by multiple ORM studies. Furthermore, it is one of the easiest strategies to implement as the software required is already applied by the hotel. In order to be able to measure the success of the strategy, clear objectives should be set. Based on the guidelines formulated, the KPI for the first month of operation of the hotel establishment will be:

- All reviews should have been answered within 24 hours
- 98% of online reviews written in the last month should have been responded
- Increase the volume of reviews in a 20%
- 80% of guest should have received a post-stay review request
- All reviews should be signed with the position and name of the respondent

These goals are based on the journals studied and the comments from the experts of the interviews and the results of the current strategies of the compset of Hotel Piscis. As the competitive set of Hotel Piscis as a 4**** hotel in the area of Sant Antoni answer their reviews within 24 hours, above 95% of their online reviews are responded and all of the answers are signed with the respondent contact information. These goals will be measured by the Community Manager at the end of the first month and a clear evaluation of the strategy will be formulated. In addition, a KPI with regards to increase in REVPAR should be measured after three months due to the relationship between online reputation and sales confirmed by Destination BC, 2013.

CHECK

The first analysis of the strategy objectives and goals will be assessed monthly in order to compare the performance of the strategy and comparing results of the goals set.

ACT

In case there are discrepancies between the set and the obtained objectives, an investigation will be conducted to find out the improvement points for the next month to ensure the realization of the objectives established.

4.5 CONCLUSION

To conclude the advisory part, an answer will be given to the advice question:" How can Hotel Piscis manage its online reputation as a 4**** category accommodation to effectively compete in the market of hotels in Sant Antoni, Ibiza?" Therefore, as Piscis Hotel will have the opportunity of starting over its online reputation, the objective of the advice is to manage effectively the ORM of the renovated Hotel Piscis ensuring a control of the online reviews for a higher customer satisfaction, increasing sales, maintaining competitiveness and accordingly leading to an increase in revenue. Theoretical framework has confirmed the relationship between online reputation and revenue, thus, the focus of answering this question is with the purpose of financial growth of the hotel chain and for this objective to be reached it is crucial to have a suitable ORM strategy.

The advice alternative strategies to effectively manage Hotel Piscis online reputation were formulated based on the ORM strategies, tactic and tools concluded from the research conducted. An overview of this information can be observed in Appendix II.Figure VII. Furthermore, these were also contrasted with the result of the desk research on the strategies of the competitive hotels for Hotel Piscis as a 4**** accommodation which served to elaborate certain guidelines to follow the strategies.

The first strategy is based on two strategies proactive and reactive by the ORM tactics of encouraging and responding. This strategy can be carried out by the same person, the Community Manager. Furthermore, it is a task that it linked since online reviews need to be encouraged in order to have content to respond. The efforts will be focused on one single OTA, Booking.com as mentioned to be the most practical review site by the interviewees and a set of guidelines on how to encourage and respond reviews will be followed by the Community Manager. Additionally, this would meet the objective of carrying out an effective ORM of the hotel establishment which consequently increases positive online reviews strengthening the online reputation of Hotel Piscis.

The second strategy consists in an innovative idea of using Facebook as a booking tool in order to increase sales since it is a Social Network that is aligned to the target market of the hotel. Furthermore, it would face the issue of seeing Social Media as a simple communication channel in ORM and the objective of being competitive in the market due to the innovative nature of the strategy.

The third strategy is based on the ORM pattern of monitoring by choosing a monitoring tool, ReviewPro, being the most popular and useful at the moment to monitor hotel online reputation. By keeping track of the UGC produced by guests, the hotel can take actions additionally, these tools provides analytics and benchmark analysis in order to assess see the competitiveness of the hotel establishment. This strategy would meet the goal of carrying out an effective ORM.

The most suitable strategy was selected on a criterion of: objective of the advice, time, financial costs, and resources. Based on this criterion, Strategy 1 of encouraging and responding to online reviews via Booking.com was selected since it fully meets the objectives of carrying out an effective online reputation management to compete in the market, the actions it can be met within the time frame as they only consists of purchasing a computer device and assigning a person for the task and the financial costs and resources required are reasonable as shown above in table 8 and 9. The total costs of the first strategy were calculated to be €600,00 and €20,627/year as the only as these would be the costs arising from technological equipment for the person responsible of the task and the annual salary of the Community Manager hired for this task. In addition, no extra costs are added with regards to the software of Booking.com since Hotel Piscis already operates its bookings with this OTA. The monthly expected costs of the financial implication of strategy 1 are also shown above in Table 9. Nonetheless, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels is in a growing economic situation thus, they count with the financial assets required for the implementation of this strategy as they are already doing an investment in the renovation of the hotel establishment and this would be included in these costs.

AFTERWORD

In this afterword a reflection is provided about the personal development, planning and organization, collaboration with others during the execution of this thesis project. Moreover, it is also reflected on the value of this piece of work for the industry in general.

To start with, the duration of this thesis assignment lasted longer than one semester. The period of writing this thesis assignment was extended as there were some paperwork issues for the researcher to move to Palma de Mallorca, Spain where one of the clients, the consulting firm offices, who provided the project, is located. As it was desired to do an internship in this company in order to be completely involved in the project of the topic of the thesis assignment and gain more profound knowledge about the concept in order to write a substantial piece of work. The internship was planned to be begin in July 2017, however, this was started mid- October. Therefore, all the deadlines of Saxion to hand in the thesis proposal report and present my thesis proposal orally were put off a quarter later.

Delimiting a research topic was quite complicated which also prolonged the start of the thesis semester. My first attempt of thesis proposal was not approved as an independent business review was considered to be an extensive project to be carried out by one person for a thesis assignment. Therefore, I decided to change the topic to Online Reputation Management. As it was a concept that I got familiarized with during my internship, it was of my interest and I realized there is vast research to conduct about it.

Cooperation in this project was a relevant matter since the project has been carried out with the aid of two clients, the hotel consulting firm providing the project and the contact with the second client, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, the hotel chain benefiting from the end results of the advice. I believe I have been very fortunate with regards to collaboration and cooperation with others. As the hotel consultant firm has always shown interest in my piece of work and were willing to assist me in my thesis assignment and provide me with the data and material that I required for the research at all times. Additionally, once this thesis proposal was approved, the writing and research process went very smoothly. The search of experts in the field available for the interviewees was not complex and the respondents showed open to share their knowledge about the concept.

Concerning the communication with my university, the contact with supervisor was steady. Mr. Ab Willemsen was always in touch and kept an eye on me during the entire process, despite I was in Spain and he was in The Netherlands. We were always in contact via E-mail and arranged multiple Skype meetings for feedback and guidance. Mr. Ab Willemsen and Mrs. Alekseeva, my second examiner, provided me with realistic and constructive feedback to improve the thesis project during all the phases of the thesis semester.

My personal development related to this thesis assignment was significant. It was not an easy period , I have been under an enormous pressure during this time. To start with, as a non-European citizen I had to do endless paperwork to get a permission to do an internship in Spain which slowed down all the process. After this was solved, while writing my thesis, I was at the same time doing an internship and since the financial remuneration of the internship was not sufficient, not to mention that I did not receive any financial support from Saxion I also had to look for another job, as I was living by my own on a foreign country. Despite all of these numerous obstacles, I decided to continue with my thesis

assignment and finalize it. In fact I can see now how all these effort was worth it since it made me grow and learn the hard way.

On the other hand, another issue was that I struggled the most was with the fact of carrying out a project by my own which was completely my responsibility, my choices and my judgment. I was used of carrying out extensive reports with a group during the courses at Saxion, thus I got the chance to overcome one of my weaknesses which would be the insecurity. During this thesis semester I learn to develop trust in myself, carrying out a project on my own I found myself many times doubting about taking the right decisions or going the right direction with the project. For instance, deciding what methodology of research analysis would be the most appropriated for the assignment. However, Saxion's supervisors provided me with guidance in this process; nevertheless, the last decision about the project was always mine.

The topic I chose for the project was of my interest, thus this facilitated the process of research since I was curious and involved in the gathering of data about Online Reputation Management. Nevertheless, the fact that it is a recent concept made it more challenging to find reliable scientific publications to support my study.

Additionally, I also presented some difficulties during the writing process was the language difference, since the thesis assignment was written in English but the interviewees were in Spanish. Despite this, the fact of being bilingual was also taken as an advantage by having access to more literature reviews written in other languages.

Some learning points that I acquired during this semester was the fact of the importance of following a planning during the research. There are always unexpected issues arising which may post delay the plan that was set. Therefore, this should always be taken into consideration and the timeframes established should be realistic. Additionally, I got a deep insight into the terminology of reputation and its major importance nowadays in the hospitality sector, which encouraged me to finish writing the assignment as I am aware that the results of this study will be practical. In fact, during the collection of data while reading journals and scientific publications for the theoretical framework of the thesis, II became aware of the power that the client has acquired by means of consumer reviews on social media channels influencing the online reputation of a business, particularly in the hospitality sector due to the intangibility of the services.

Despite the purpose of this thesis project is delivering an advice to a specific company of the hotel sector, PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels, the results of the research have relevant implications for the tourism industry in general as the impact of online reviews in the hospitality sector has reached an exorbitant level, guests rely on online reviews to make purchase decisions. The need for research in this aspect is important as ORM is highly dependent on trends; therefore, investigation about this concept should be continuous. Additionally, the same methodology of research can be applied to other hotel establishments simply applying their own competitors to the benchmark analysis. Furthermore, contributors of this thesis assignment, experts interviewed, can also benefit from the results of the project as examples of ORM practices stated by hotel workers with hotel consultant's knowledge are contrasted. Thus, conclusions have been drawn from theory and practice where both parties could learn from.

To conclude, I certainly believe that this research has confirmed that the subject of the thesis project, ORM is a recently emerged field of study which calls for further research contributions.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I – PlayaSol Ibiza Hotels
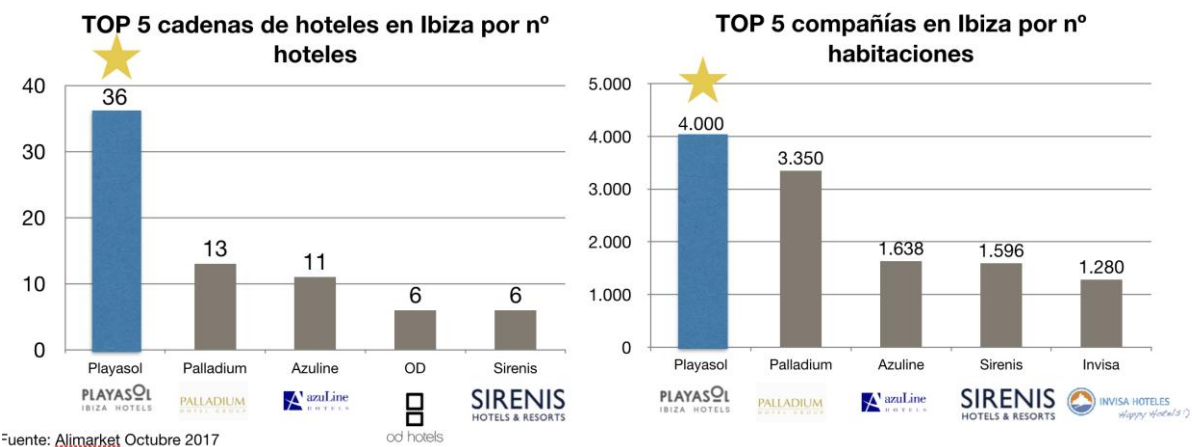
Graph I.I. PlayaSol Top 5 Hotel Chain and Top 5 hotels by number of rooms. (Source: the hotel factory– Piscis Hotel IBR Project)

	San Antonio de Portmany	Sant Josep de Sa Talaia	Ibiza Ciudad	Playa D'en Bossa	Cala Tarida
2*	Hotel Piscis Aparthotel del Mar Apartamentos Formentera II y II Apartamentos Central City Hotel Don Pepe	Aparthotel Club Marítim Aparthotel Monterrey Aparthotel La Sirena	Don Quijote Central Playa Apartamentos Lux Mar Apartamentos Playa Sol I		
3*	Playasol Marco Polo I Playasol Marco Polo II	Hotel Apartamentos San Marino Apartamentos Playasol Riviera Playasol Riviera San Remo S'espanyol Apartamentos Blue Star	Playasol Lei Ibiza Playasol Marítimo Apartamentos Tropical Garden Apartamentos Panoramic Aparthotel PLayasol Jabeque Soul	Aparthotel Playasol Mogambo	
3* Sup.			Apartamentos Playasol Jabeque Dreams	La Noria Playasol Mare Nostrum	Playasol Cala Tarida
4*				Playasol Bossa Flow Apartamentos Playasol My Tivoli The New Algarb Hotel Playasol	

Table I.I. PlayaSol Hotels distribution by category and location in Ibiza (Source: the hotel factory – PlayaSol Piscis IBR Project)
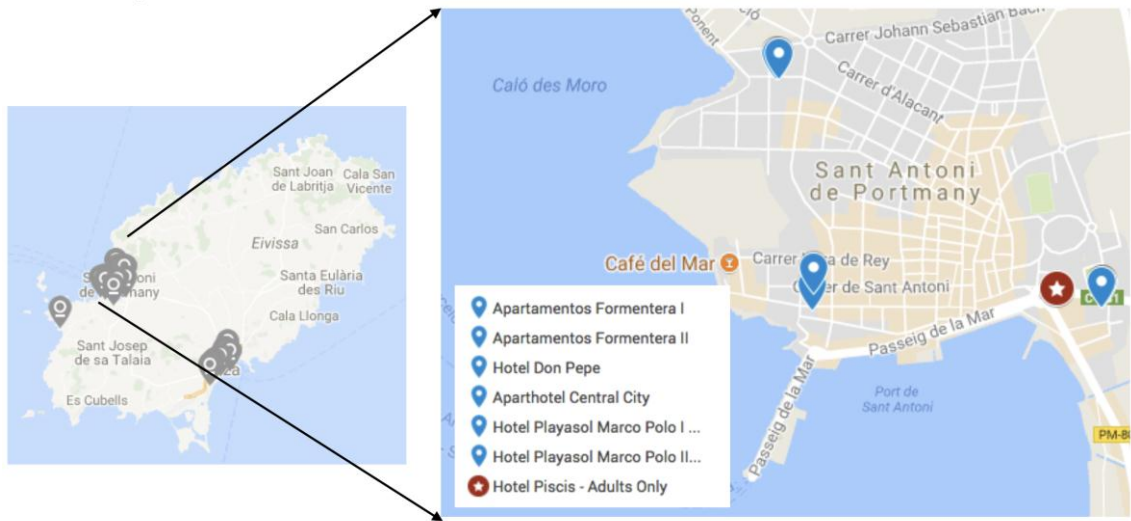
Map I.I. PlayaSol Hotels in Sant Antony (Source: Google Maps, PlayaSol)

Hotel	Booking (s/10)		Tripadvisor (s/5)		HolidayCheck (s/6)		Trivago (s/100)	
	Score	Opiniones	Score	Opiniones	Score	Opiniones	Score	Opiniones
Playasol Piscis	6,7	1628	2,5	1208	3,9	54	60	1305
Sol House Mixed by Ib.Rocks	8,3	1214	4,0	589	5,4	47	76	366
Ibiza Rocks	7,2	335	4,0	1.449	2,0	2	72	286
THB Ocean Beach Class	9,0	216	4,5	247	5,4	13	82	333
Axel Beach Ibiza Suites	8,9	341	4,0	230	3,7	85	82	2.045
Amistat Island Hostel	8,4	670	4,5	44	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Intertur Hotel Hawaii Ibiza	8,5	139	4,5	2.110	5,2	391	84	980
Apart. Marina Playa	9,0	879	4,5	606	5,7	5	85	858
THB Naeco Ibiza Class	8,5	303	4,0	86	4,6	10	69	410

Table I.II. Online reputation of party hotels in San Antoni, Ibiza. Source the hotel factory

Compared to its main competitors, Hotel Piscis scores the lowest ratings in the four OTAs selected, Booking, Tripadvisor, HolidayCheck and Trivago, as it can be observed with the range of colors. The scores are measured from 1-10 by Booking, 1-5 by Tripadvisor, 1-6 by HolidayCheck and 1-100 by Trivago.

	Nombre hotel	*	Nº Habs	1ª línea	Adults only	Destino
1	Sol House Mixed by Ibiza Rocks	4*	275	Sí	No	Bahía de San Antonio
2	Ibiza Rocks	3*	368	No	Sí	Bahía de San Antonio
3	THB Ocean Beach Class	4*	63	Sí	Sí	Bahía de San Antonio
4	Axel Beach Ibiza Suites	4*	89	Sí	Sí	Bahía de San Antonio
5	Amistat Island Hostel	2*	62	No	Sí	Bahía de San Antonio
6	Intertur Hotel Hawaii Ibiza	4*	210	Sí	No	Bahía de San Antonio
7	Aparthotel Marina Playa	3*	60	Sí	Sí	Bahía de San Antonio
8	THB Naeco Ibiza	4*	104	Sí	No	Bahía de San Antonio

Table I.III.Compset hotels of PlayaSol Piscis Hotel, category, number of rooms, foreshore and location.
Source: the hotel factory

The hotels selected to be compared with Hotel Piscis are party hotels, attracting the same target group of party segmentation and sharing the same location, Bahia de San Antonio, Ibiza. In effect, the hotels belong to different categories from 2** hotels up to 4**** hotels, however, the rating of these scores are also made by different clients aware of the category of the accommodation they have chosen. Accordingly, it is reasonable to consider these hotels as a competitive set since they share the same location, segmentation and hotel concept. The selection of the *compset* has been carefully singled out by the team of THF that carried out the Internal Business Report.

APPENDIX II– Models

Plan	Listen	Participate	Evaluate	Respond
Why participate in social media? What are you trying to accomplish? Timeframe?	Before jumping into a conversation, get a lay of the land	Create engaging profiles with pictures of real employees.	Evaluate inbound comments and determine whether to respond or to remain silent	Unhappy customers should be engaged. Show that you are listening, and pursue a solution if possible.
Who within the organization will participate in social media conversations? All conversations or a specific category?	Spend some time monitoring conversations on sites where your brand, products, or industry are being discussed.	Create groups (i.e Facebook) and pages (i.e Twitter)	In some instances it is better not to respond (i.e rants or bashing), in others, a response is a must	Do not respond to aggressive, hostile, degrading individuals, monitor only.
Ensure employee Guidelines are in place for your organization	Identify channels (forums, blogs, social networks) and influencers (positive, negative and neutral)	Join other groups & forums, and follow individuals.	For neutral, positive or accurate negative posts, the choice to respond is yours.	Inaccurate posts should be corrected in a positive tone
		Post status updates and create unique content. Begin to build a trial for others to learn about you and your brand		Factual posts are ideal for continuing the engagement

Table II.I. When and How to Participate in the Social Web (Source:Zenebe,Y., 2012)
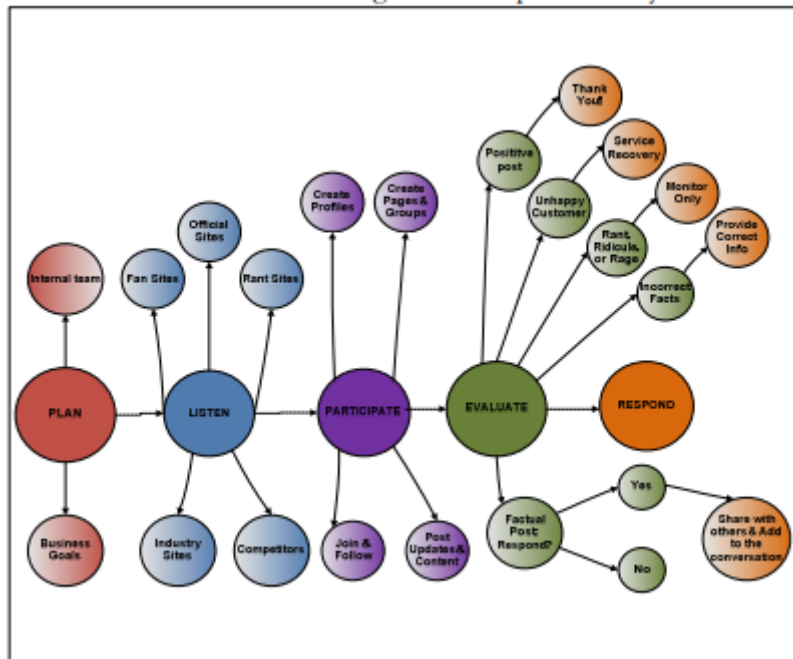

Figure II.I When and How to Participate in the Social Web (Source:Zenebe, Y., 2012)
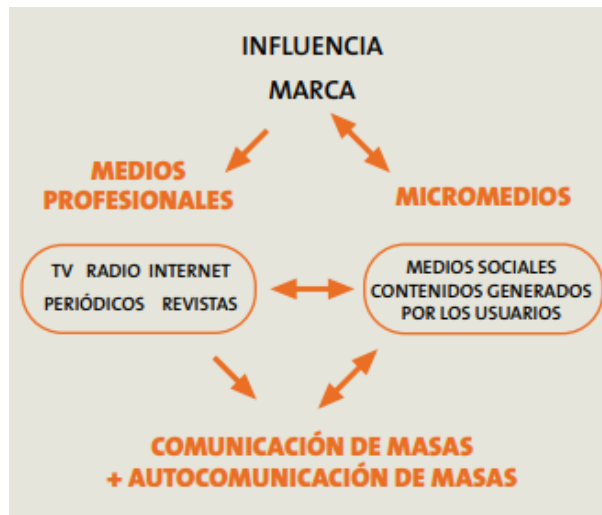
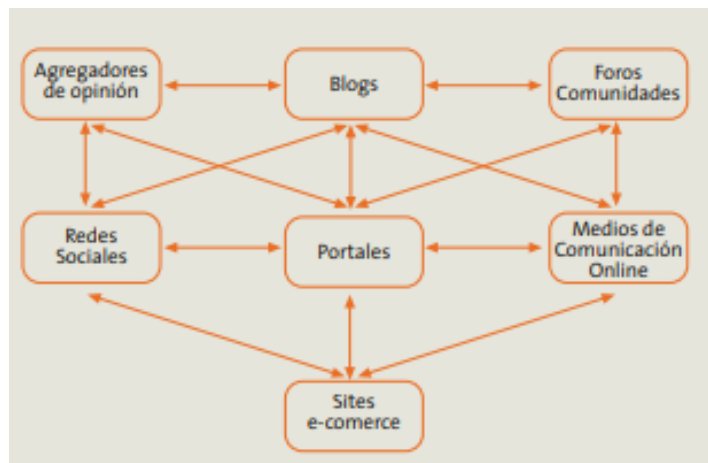Figure II.II. Social Web Influence Model (Source: Del Fresno, M., 2012)

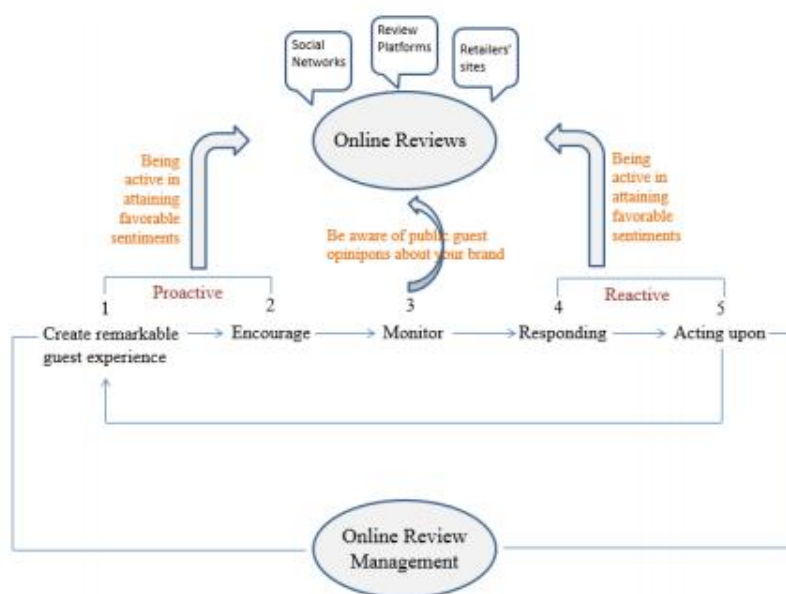Figure II.III. Means for online monitoring (Source:Del Fresno, M., 2012)

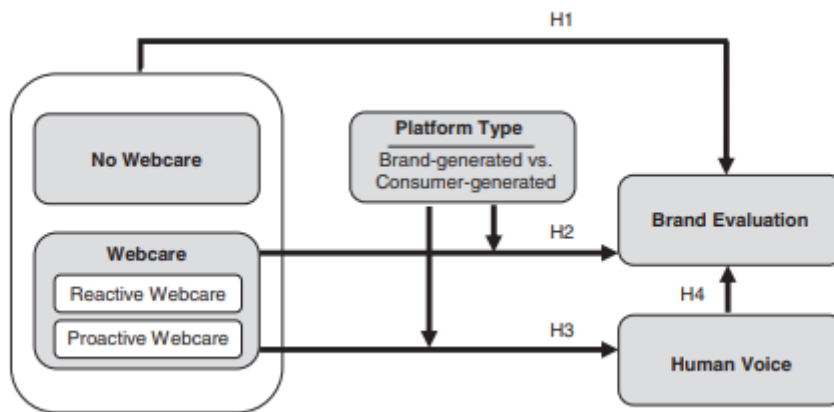Figure II.IV. Online Review Management guidelines for Hotel Industry (Source: Nguyen,K., 2015)

Figure II. V. Conceptual model of webcare effects. (Source: Van Noort, G & Willemsen, L.M., 2011)
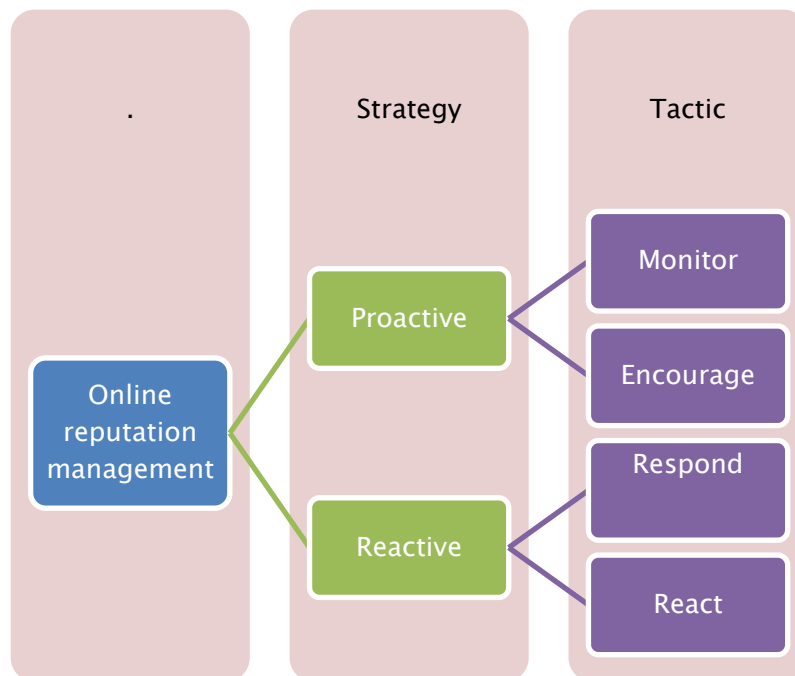
Figure I.V. Tree diagram ORM strategies and tactics in the hotel industry (Source:Nguyen, K., 2015, Van Noort, G. & Willemsen, L. M.,2011, Destination BC (2013), Del Fresno, M, (2012))
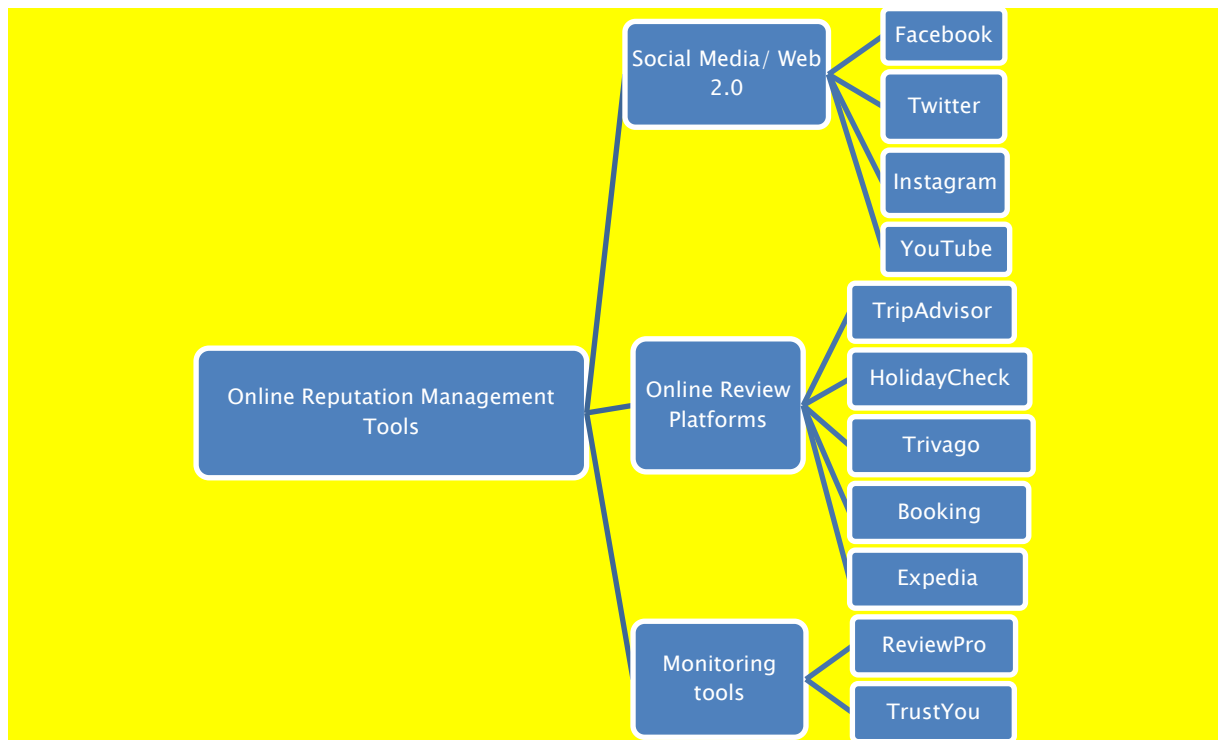
Figure II.VI. Tree diagram Online Reputation Tools in the hotel industry. (Del Fresno, M, (2012), Marín, E.(2016) Destination BC(2013).

FigureII.VII. Tree diagram online reputation strategies, tactics and tools. (Del Fresno, M.(2012), Marín, E.(2016), Destination BC(2013), Interviews(own research).

APPENDIX III – AAOCC Criteria

Title publication: La reputación Online en el Sector Hotelero
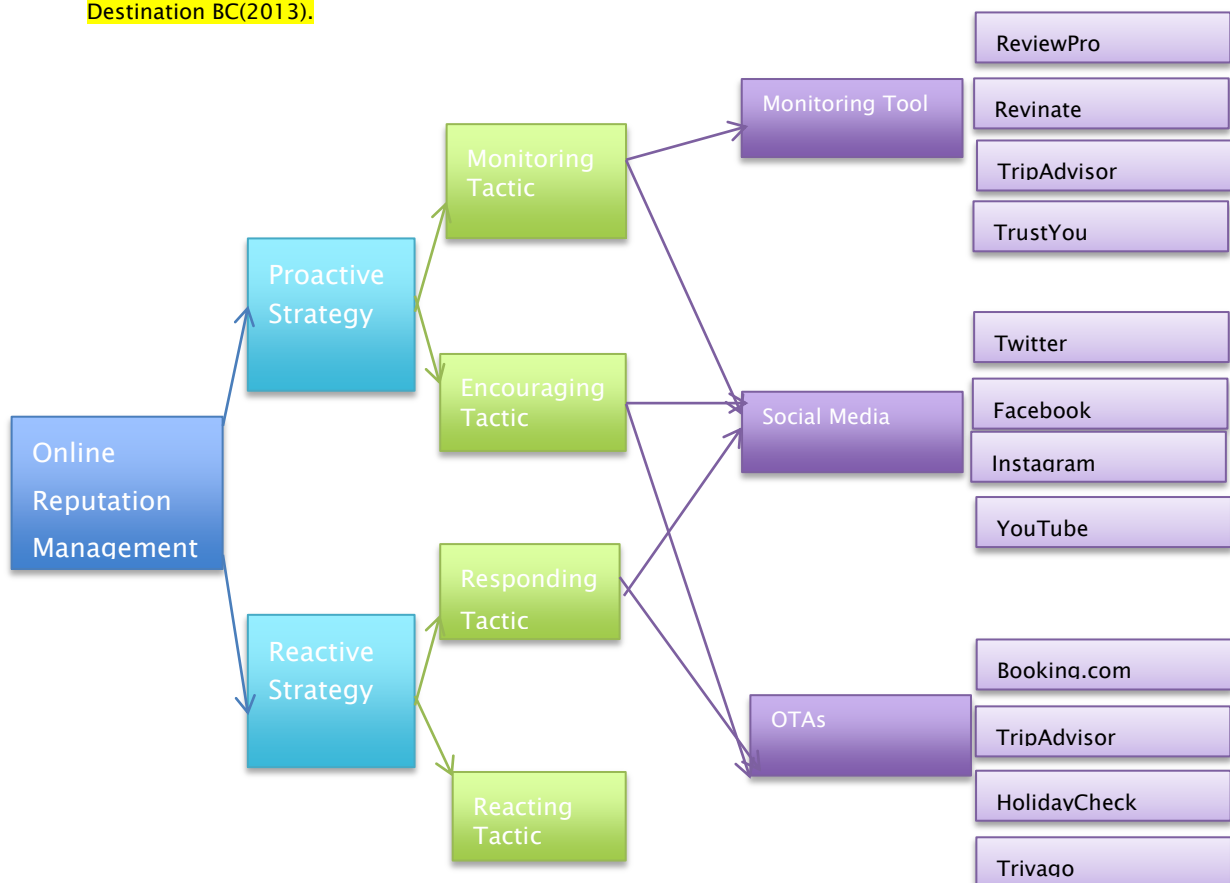
AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Elena Marín Soto
What qualifications does the author have?	International Business Management Bachelor
What is the URL?	http://dspace.umh.es/bitstream/11000/2750/1/TFG%20Mar%C3%ADn%20Soto%2C%20Elena.pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Thesis assignment
Who is the intended audience?	Hotel Sector
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	Yes, 2016
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Online Reputation Management Guide

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Destination British Columbia
What qualifications does the author have?	Corporate and marketing strategy and destination management
Who is the publisher?	DMO
What is the URL?	https://www.destinationbc.ca/getattachment/Programs/Guides-Workshops-and-Webinars/Guides/Tourism-Business-Essentials-Guides/TBEGuide_ORM2014_SEPT29_LINKED-compressed.pdf.aspx
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Advise tourism sector about ORM strategies
Who is the intended audience?	Tourism sector
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2014
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Cómo investigar la reputación online en los medios sociales de la Web 2.0

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Miguel del Fresno
What qualifications does the author have?	Teacher at UNED, Sociology Doctor, Master in Society of information and knowledge, Executive Master in E-Business. MBA Bachelor and Phylosophy.
What is the URL?	http://eprints.rclis.org/16158/1/Miguel-Del-Fresno-Investigacion-reputacion-Online.pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Part of a publication about communication and image
Who is the intended audience?	Business
CURRENCY	
Is the information current?	Yes
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Los hoteles de la región de Murcia ante las redes sociales y la reputación online

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Soledad María Martínez
What qualifications does the author have?	
Who is the publisher?	Asociación Española de Expertos Cientificos en Turismo
What is the URL?	file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/117-449-1-PB.pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Online Reputation in the hotel sector
Who is the intended audience?	Spanish hoteliers
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2012
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: The Role of Online Reputation Management in Strategic Business Decisions in Ericsson

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Yodit Zenebe Tafese
What qualifications does the author have?	Master in Informatics
Who is the publisher?	Jönköping International Business School
What is the URL?	http://hj.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:556294/FULLTEXT01.pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Explore ORM role in making strategic decisions
Who is the intended audience?	Business
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2012
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Online Damage Control: The Effects of Proactive Versus Reactive Webcare Interventions in Consumer-generated and Brand-generated Platforms

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Guda van Noort and Lotte M. Willemsen
What qualifications does the author have?	Marketing experts
Who is the publisher?	ASCoR, University of Amsterdam
What is the URL?	https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/48080915/j.intmar.2011.07.00120160815-1059-rqjjhn.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1533115280&Signature=%2BgReB2HsKQMx0xuNwhl3%2FAfUI7Q%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DOnline_Damage_Control_The_Effects_of_Pro.pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Online Complaint management, Electronic word of mouth
Who is the intended audience?	Business
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2011
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Online Review Management in Hotel Industry

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Kim Nguyen
What qualifications does the author have?	Master in International Business
Who is the publisher?	University of Vaasa
What is the URL?	file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/Nguyen_Kim-2015-Online_Review_Management_in_Hotel_Industry%20(1).pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Marketing in the hotel sector
Who is the intended audience?	Hotel sector
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	Yes, 2015
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: What Matters Most to Your Guests: An Exploratory Study of Online Reviews

AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Jie Zhang and Rohit Verma
What qualifications does the author have?	DBA asisstand professor of service operations management at the University of Victoria and PhD external relations for the Cornell University
Who is the publisher?	Cornell University
What is the URL?	file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/Cornell-%20What%20matters%20most%20to%20your%20guests%20(1).pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Research about link ADR and online reputation in hotel sector
Who is the intended audience?	Tourism and hotel industry
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2017
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	

Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Title publication: Hotel Performance Impact of Socially Engaging with Consumers

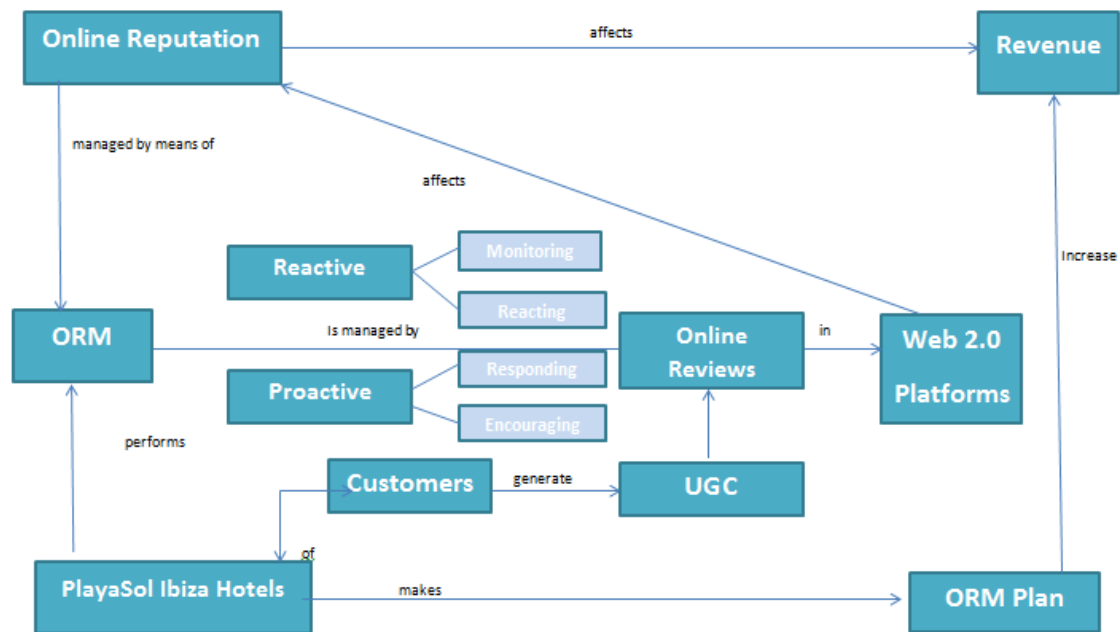| AUTHORITY & ACCURACY	
Who are the authors?	Chris Anderson and Saram Han
What qualifications does the author have?	PhD professor at Cornell University and MS doctoral at Cornell University.
Who is the publisher?	Cornell University
What is the URL?	file:///C:/Users/Usuario/Downloads/Hotel%20Performance%20Impact%20(1).pdf
Is the information accurate?	Yes
Is the text free of errors, well written and cited properly?	Yes
OBJECTIVITY	
Why was the page written (motives)?	Association of increase in rating and encouraging reviews
Who is the intended audience?	Tourism and hotel industry
CURRENCY	
Is the information current? When was it produced?	2016
Is the information still valid?	Yes
COVERAGE	
Is the information relevant to the topic of the thesis?	Yes
Is the material presented at an appropriate level?	Yes
Is the information accessible?	Yes

Table III. Figure 1. Relation between core concepts of the thesis project (own elaboration)

Interview guide

Introduction: My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need

to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

1. How would you define Online Reputation Management in the hotel industry?
2. Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?
3. In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?
4. How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?
5. What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?
    a. Monitor
        i. Why should online reputation be monitored?
        ii. How do you monitor online reputation?
        iii. What are the best platforms to monitor online reputation?
    b. Respond and react
        i. Why should reviews be responded?
        ii. How do you respond to negative/positive reviews?
        iii. Who should respond to the reviews?
        iv. Which reviews should be responded?
        v. When to respond?
    c. Encourage
        i. Why should reviews be encouraged?
        ii. How do you encourage more reviews?

6. What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector? Please reason why.
7. What Social Networking Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.
8. What Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.
9. Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

APPENDIX V – Interview transcripts

<u>Interview transcript 1</u>

Interviewee: Revenue Manager & E- Commerce Manager

Interviewer: Student Ying Yee Tang

Date: 04.05.2018

Interview setting: It was a face-to-face interview and it took place in the afternoon from 17:00 to 17:45 in the offices of Hotel Bonanza in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The interview was conducted in Spanish as the interviewee felt more comfortable answering the questions in his mother tongue. However, this was translated into English for the assignment.

(Start of interview)

My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is

5   conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

IR: Now I'm going to start with the first question. How would you define Online Reputation Management?

IE: Important. I believe that is the word that this concept defines ORM nowadays. However, we should

10   not mistake the concept of ORM with the questions and wishes. Reviews are very important. We monitor them everywhere, we control them. On ReviewPro, TripAdvisor, Booking. Not only ours but also from our competitors. One by one. All of our competitors. Right now I have access, automatically. It is important. Very important.

IR: Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?

15   IE: ORM is very important because it affects the booking decision. I would say it depends 50% on the price and 50% on the online reviews. So it affects sales.

IR: In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?

IE: Every employee of the hotel should be aware of the concept of ORM. With regards to monitoring, we

20   do it from different departments, here revenue, e-commerce I respond to the reviews on Tripadvisor. From Barcelona, we have an E-commerce manager on charge of the Social Media. The Community Manager is on charge of sending an email requesting reviews after the stay on all the review platforms. Furthermore, we also bring up the most important reviews in our weekly meetings with all the departments.

25   **IR: How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? And What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?**

IE: The thing is there must be an strategy. Control, visualize, monitor, act, we act every Monday. We meet every Monday and take decisions. And we read we set some criteria. We mostly read the alerts. If some day someone wants to have our attention we should receive a rating of a 5/10. But if 50 guys

30   would write the coffee was great fine. We do not mind. We know it already.

There are actually web portals, booking engines and OTAs that are focusing their sales on Facebook. For instance, there was a hotel in Puerto Portals here in Mallorca. The hotel BCM Rocks which is an accommodation for a young target where all its sales strategies were focused on Facebook. Since you entered the hotel you had to use Facebook, to do the check in. You had to check in on Facebook. I

35   cannot use that strategy here, because my clients here are above 40 years old and they wouldn't do it. They are looking for privacy. Guests under 30 years old, they want to show what they are doing for

instance, they are on holiday, partying in Ibiza. That would not work here. I know these strategies, I'm aware of but them but that definitely would not work here.

40 **IR: What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?**

IE: We monitor though our review platforms, ReviewPro, TripAdvisor, Booking and our own Website where we use Mirai. We answer all of our reviews, sometimes we use copy paste but we answer. We react to the reviews by meeting every Monday and discussing them. And we encourage reviews by sending an email after the stay of the guest.

45 We are very active in the topic of reviews. We answer reviews and encourage reviews, because if you go to a hotel you want to read something about it before. And if you read comments that have been written 3 months ago are not very convinced. However, if you see that 50 people have made reviews about your hotel in the last week gives more reliability and trust. TripAdvisor will position better a hotel that has more reviews.

50 We answer all the reviews, but more from the sales perspective. I get paid to sell, so we just need to continue producing. People are very emotional. And I write more direct.

We received daily emails when the customers send questions. We answer this personally, however, more copy paste. I also realized that customers only read the last four reviews and that's it. Unfortunately, people write a lot, way too many reviews.

55 **IR: What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector?**

IE: We use ReviewPro to monitor the five hotels of the chain and also the competitive set. When you use this program you set the competitors and then you also set certain criteria that you would like to monitor about your hotel. This program reports daily, weekly, monthly, every 30 days. It informs you what is going on what happened not only in your hotel but also the competitive hotels you have set.

60 And we pay for this.

We also use TripAdvisor. But this has changed in the last years. It started as ORM but it ended up as an OTA. Nowadays they are more interested that you can sell through them. And all this about online reputation management they have left it aside, it did not generate revenue for them. They used this to become known; however, what generates sales is OTA. Today basically they are interested in selling.

65 However, also people send a lot of questions thorough TripAdvisor.

We have great analytics. We also use Booking. We have access to it since there are one of our OTA. All analytics is private. Only hoteliers have access this information.

TripAdvisor also has great analytics. We have increased our rating from 9.1 to 9.2 in one year. The Reviews are growing yearly. TripAdvisor has a great tool that shows you the words with colors and

70 sizes of the most mentioned words in the reviews. For instance breakfast, bed, or even *frühstück*. In the case many Germans have made comments about this. Bed and cleanliness are the words that appear the most. So we check if the color is red and then we start acting. We check this weekly, since only because of one review we will not be concerned about it.

So to sum up, to monitor the reviews we use TripAdvisor, ReviewPro which requires a fee and it is really

75 good. ReviewPro also generate alerts. These are alerts about the reviews. We also use Google Alerts if someone googles the name of our hotel. But we do not use it that much. However, ReviewPro monitors all the websites together, Google, TripAdvisor, Expedia and Booking. They also send all of these reports but I do not read all of these reviews. If a guest writes that he didn't like the coffee I am not going to read that. We just look at the summary of the week.

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IR: Which Social Networking Sites and Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector?

IE: ReviewPro also produces reports about Social Media. We have an E-commerce in Barcelona who is on charge of Social Media. We do monitor how many followers we have. But you know what happens.

85 Social Media is not a way of selling but a communication tool. People use Social Media once they have booked. However, we do monitor how many people have followed us, made comments. And this person in Barcelona sends us weekly reports.

Once every some time we control Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. But as I said before as social media isn't a tool for selling but to communicate. You cannot make a reservation through Facebook. So

90 people make a reservation for example on Booking.com, and then people go to Facebook, and maybe give a like to our hotel. So what happens, we don't pay that much attention that we should. We have Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn.

Yes, LinkedIn too. Mostly, because of human resource so to hire people. However, LinkedIn has lately become more like Facebook. People are posting what they do. Facebook has ended up more like a

95 garbage bin. I don't even use Facebook. Twitter became like Trump. Instagram is about who is the richest. LinkedIn became like Facebook. This is an evolution. Nothing is what it seems. LinkedIn was used to look for a job some years ago. Now you go into LinkedIn and you see that your friends are posting pictures of themselves in their free time.

IR: Which Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector?

100 IE: No one reads TripAdvisor to decide where to stay. People look up on Google. Most of the people read the reviews on Google and then on Booking.com. I believe TripAdvisor started as a review platform, however, it has changed. I personally use more Google. It is more reachable, of easier access. In my opinion, I personally haven't done anything on TripAdvisor in ages.

Booking is a very effective review platform because only the guest who has made a booking is allowed

105 to write reviews. So it is more reliable.

IR: Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector?

Important Very Important.

Interviewee 2: Community Manager

Interviewer: Student Ying Yee Tang

Date: 04.05.2018

Interview setting: It was a face-to-face interview and it took place in the afternoon from 16:00 to 16:45 in the offices of Hotel Bonanza in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The interview was conducted in Spanish, however, this was translated into English for the assignment.

(Start of interview)

My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is

5   conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

IR: Now I'm going to start with the first question. How would you define Online Reputation Management?

IE: I would define it as an art. I come from humanities, I studied archeology but somehow I ended up in

10   the tourism sector. Mostly, because of the languages I speak since I'm half Venezuelan half German. So I really think writing a review it is an art, it takes time and effort. And this should be appreciated. So I believe managing and answering these reviews should be something that it should be done personally. However, this takes a lot of time and sometimes it is hard to answer all of them.

IR: Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?

15   IE: It is important because it ends up affecting the revenue. After all, we are a business and the fundamental is making *Schwarze Zahlen* , how we say it in German.

IR: In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?

In our company, one of the responsible are E-commerce who is in Barcelona and takes care of Social

20   Media. I hope I can assume this responsibility too someday. Then also me community manager, on charge of responding to the reviews and sending emails to request reviews in all our OTA platforms. But also the revenue manager, who answers reviews on Tripadvisor and monitors the analytics on the tools we use.

25   **IR: How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?**

IE: I believe answering to the reviews is one the fundamental strategies. But also monitoring what people write and make decisions based on them. Also requesting more reviews is important because the guest would rather book a hotel that has recent reviews than months ago.

30   Responding, we use it as a weapon of sales. Since the moment of booking they start making questions. There are many silly questions to be honest. For example, that they would like a double bed and they tell all everything about their lives. Therefore, since the beginning until the end of their stay we would like to give the feeling that behind the computer there is a person that is interested about their lives. If it is true or not, that is not the matter as long as the client is happy. We are also a company and we

35   want to sell.

I'm here to answer the questions of the reviews. During the last years we have been trying in this hotel to make the guest feel closer. More like a family. So what we want to achieve is that he/she feels at

home. So they chose me that I come from humanities. Any kind of question we receive, I try to respond in a more human way.

40 **IR: What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?**

IE: Responding is one of the procedures. So about the reviews, we do answer, we try to answer all of them in a personal way. It comes to a point that you cannot answer that you can offer for instance a double room. Thus, you must be selective after all. We receive all messages through Booking.com, Expedia, our own Website. From all of them, we make a pre-selection and we answers bout 80-90% of

45 all of the questions.

We are a business, the goal is making revenue, and however, we also want to be humans. The aim is to sell from our website directly since it is the most effective way for us of making revenue. Therefore, we would like to reach that throughout how we treat our client before their stay, before coming to the hotel when they are welcomed by the receptionist and the director. But also after their stay, for

50 example, when they receive an email from me asking about their opinion to write their review. So we encourage the reviews from every booking tool they have used. Or if they have booked directly from our website, we encourage writing a review on TripAdvisor. A way of encouraging reviews is sending an email asking for their review. After all, everyone has an opinion and is free to express their opinion and if you feel bad. Writing is an art.

55 We are trying to improve this. After all it is something new for all of us. So I believe working as a team and monitoring how guests react, with this we will see.

IR: What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector?

IE: We use ReviewPro which provides us a review of all the review platforms and social media. It is very complete and we make use of also Booking and TripAdvisor analytics.

60 **IR: Which Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector?**

IE:I think it heavily depends on the age of the customer. People that come here to a four star hotel superior can afford higher prices than a young person. They are not on Facebook. But they are on LinkedIn.

With regards to TripAdvisor, I personally never read TripAdvisor when booking a hotel. I don't consider

65 it to be an important platform. I personally use more Google. Also it is important the age of the guest writing the comments. For instance on TripAdvisor, you realized it is all elderly people. You notice this for their way of writing. It is becoming less common that young people write a review.

Booking is a website where you can make a reservation. So once you have booked they website sends the guest a message if you would like to write a review. And those reviews can only be written if you

70 have made a booking. It is a very active website. I spend all the time answering the questions. Therefore, I consider Booking.com one of the most important Review platforms.

IR: Which Social Networking Sites do you consider the most effective in the hotel sector?

IE: And about social media we don't put that much effort since it is more a communication tool than a sales tool. It is mostly used once the guest has booked. Of course we do try to get many followers and

75 we monitor this. But the response to the reviews we consider an aspect more important.

IR: Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector?

I believe I have said it all.

Interviewee 3: Senior Hotel Consultant

Interviewer: Student Ying Yee Tang

Date: 11.05.2018

Interview setting: It was a face-to-face interview and it took place in the afternoon from 14:30 to 15:15 in the offices of the hotel factory in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The interview was conducted in Spanish, however, this was translated into English for the assignment.

(Start of interview)

My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

5

IR: Now I'm going to start with the first question. How would you define Online Reputation Management?

IE: I would define ORM as the management of the reviews of guests according to their experiences in the touristic establishments, which are seen by future clients with access to the internet.

10

IR: Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?

IE: Related to the hotel sector, online reputation is highly sensible to the opinions and experiences shared by the customers. The ratings affect the booking decision when choosing a hotel and it also affects the price of the services, consequently the Gross Operating Profit GOP.

IR: In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?

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IE: In a hotel it usually is the Guest Experience Manager. Or if it is a small hotel it can be the general manager, front office manager or even the receptionist. But this really depends on the hotel. In some of them they even have a person who is on charge of online reputation on Social Media For instance, Melia does this. For instance, if there is an online review about the kitchen then the F&B Manager would personally answer to this question. This is one of the chains that puts great efforts on ORM.

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IR: How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?

IE: The best strategies I could recommend are: Always answer all negative reviews before 24 hours. Between 24 hours and 48 hours. Always. Try to answer to all of the reviews. But not all of them. Because it shouldn't be an automatic response like. Thanks for the review. But more personal. And another advice is to sign the reviews with the name and the position of the person answering. And in the same language of the review.

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IR: What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?

IE: I think this is divided into two. First, the management of the reviews itself and then, the management of the content of the reviews.

Management of the reviews would consist of: Responding to reviews: This should be done professionally, with personal response, being direct and looking for solutions, encouraging more reviews. Encouraging reviews should be done by sending an e-mail after the stay or during the check-out of the guest. And finally, getting as many positive reviews as possible, this depends on the

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performance of the hotel, having a professional staff, good communication between staff, good condition of the rooms, having WiFi, personalized services, etc.

Then the management of the content of the reviews should be done by: Monitoring the reviews by means of review tool, react within the company, making conclusions of the reviews, sharing this content with all the hotel, making changes and decisions. Lastly, comparing the ORM practices with the competitors by means of benchmarking.

IR: What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: The most popular and used tools in the hotel sector nowadays are ReviewPro and Trustyou.

However, Revinate and Customer Alliance are also very helpful. For instance, I used Customer Alliance to write my thesis assignment. Those are the four tops I would say.

IR: Which Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: I would say the main review site at the moment for Spanish hotel chains is Booking. First of all, because of most of the reservations are made through this channel as an OTA exclusive for hotels and secondly because the reviews are reliable since only customers are only allowed to leave a review after the reservation has been done.

Then Tripadvisor since it is known worldwide and it is very popular. Nevertheless, there are many fake reviews since everyone is allowed to share a comment regardless they have stayed or not at the hotel establishment. Also this is not only for hotels but also for restaurants, activities and destinations in general.

The same occurs with Google, the guest can rate a hotel, leave a comment as is the most popular SEO engine, however, it is for everything not only for hotels and everyone has access to writing reviews.

Another important Review site is Trivago which is exclusive for hotels. However, this does not allow writing reviews, only rating.

IR: Which Social Networking Sites do you consider the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: It really depends on the target group of the hotel. If it is a young guest from 15-35 years old, Instagram would be the biggest social media site. However, Facebook would suit more adults so above 25 years old.

Instagram has gained popularity with the Instagram stories tool which supports engagement with the client. Instagram focuses more on sharing media than written content like Facebook.

Review tools also support to have a control over the Social Media.

IR: Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: Well, as a comment. I once had a personal interview with a worker of the online reputation management tool TrustYou and he made a remark that in online reputation management you should chase the reviews of the guest who are satisfied but not enough satisfied to leave a comment.

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Interviewee: Junior Hotel Consultant

Interviewer: Student Ying Yee Tang

Date: 14.05.2018

Interview setting: It was a face-to-face interview and it took place in the afternoon from 16:00 to 16:45 in the offices of the hotel factory in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. The interview was conducted in Spanish, however, this was translated into English for the assignment.

(Start of interview)

My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is
5   conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

IR: Now I'm going to start with the first question. How would you define Online Reputation Management in the hotel sector?

IE: ORM is a powerful management tool which hoteliers should take into consideration for all the
10   dimensions of the administration of the hotel establishment. It is a marketing tool and another as a performance indicator.

It could be used as a marketing tool to attract potential clients, communicate and establish relationships. Nevertheless, also as a performance indicator in order to see the performance of the hotel, identifying the areas with the most priority and most valued attributes. Also as a performance
15   indicator it helps measure and monitor the satisfaction of the client and analyze the aspects most and less valued of the competitive set.

IR: Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?

IE: ORM is important in the hotel sector as it is constantly linked to the activities of the client. For
20   instance, it is found in all the phases of the customer journey. It influences at the time of booking when the guest is looking for information about the accommodation, they read reviews. Therefore, it has an effect in the decision making of the reservation. Also after the reservation is made, the guest also can ask its doubts to the establishment. And also post-stay when the client leaves its own review.

All of this has an economic result. For instance, I read that 1% increase in rating has an impact in hotels
25   on its ADR, occupation and RevPar.

IR: In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?

IE: I think it depends on the hotel, its being more common that now they have one person responsible for this task, called, guest experience manager.

30   **IR: How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?**

IE: I believe the best strategies to manage online reputation are:

1. Encouraging reviews
2. Answering to the reviews
35   3. Generating positive reviews

IR: What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?

IE: It is important to measure and monitor the satisfaction of the client, identify also the key areas that need improvement and recognize the most valued aspects by the guests. And analyzing the best and worst rated aspects compared to the competitors.

40

IR: What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: There are two practical tools which monitor online reputation. One of them is TrustYou which analyzes multiple channels like Booking, Tripadvisor, Trivago, TUI, Expedia, HolidayCheck, Zoover,

45 Facebook, between others. They provide an overall score of all the channels, monitor the performance, popularity, response rate and reviews.

And then there is ReviewPro that compares the online reputation with the competitive set. It analyzes semantically the reviews made by guests. And it offers a competitive quality index.

50 **IE: Which Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.**

IE: The main review sites nowadays are Booking, Tripadvisor, Google, Trivago worldwide. And then for the German market Holidaycheck and the Dutch market Zoover.

IR: Which Social Networking Sites do you consider the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

55 The main social media that are used in the hotel sector are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook offers a rating so this is one of the most important. But I think it is a pack, you should use Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. And then you put more emphasis on one of them according to the segmentation. Instagram is also very powerful related to sharing media, with the option of sharing stories, for instance the life within the hotel.

60

IR: Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector?

A last statement would be that considering online reputation is not anymore an option but a priority. A hotel should invest in order to be competitive in the current market.

Interviewee: Digital marketing consultant

Interviewer: Student Ying Yee Tang

Date: 09.05.2018

Interview setting: It was a face-to-face interview and it took place in the afternoon from 15:00 to 15:45 thorough Skype since their offices are located in Barcelona and the researcher is in Palma de Mallorca. The interview was conducted in Spanish, however, this was translated into English for the assignment.

(Start of interview)

My name is Ying Yee I'm currently coursing my last year of my studies of Tourism Management in The Netherlands at Saxion University of Applied Sciences. To finalize my studies I need to carry out a Bachelor thesis assignment. This thesis assignment consists of a research about online reputation management for a hotel in Ibiza which is concerned about its low online reputation. This interview is
5   conducted to learn more about the concept of ORM and the strategies in order to provide a complete advice. The interview will last 45 minutes and be recorded and transcribed.

IR: Now I'm going to start with the first question. How would you define Online Reputation Management in the hotel industry?

IE: I would define ORM as one of the key success factors in the sales for a hotel.

10   **IR: Why is Online Reputation Management important in the hotel industry?**

IE: Why is this important? Simply because the hotel industry is one of the most susceptible and sensitive sectors to online reviews generated by the customers. There are multiple studies that confirm that 65% of guest would not book a hotel if this does not have reviews. Since 2015 ORM is a priority of inversions by hotels, followed by small scale renovations, marketing and staff training.

15   **Interviewer: In your opinion and experience, who are the main responsible of carrying out ORM in the hotel industry?**

IE: In my opinion ORM is a task that should be carried out in house. That means in the hotel since the staff working in the hotel are the best to judge and take action on the online reviews.

There is a possibility of outsourcing, but I would not advice this since as an outsider the actions taken
20   might differ.

IR: How do you carry out ORM in the hotel industry? What are the best strategies to manage Online reputation?

IE: ORM in the hotel sector consists of gathering the feedback and distributing in an effective way to maintain competitiveness and increase sales throughout review and booking portals and social media.
25   Some important strategies in ORM in the hotel industry are that all staff in the hotel should be involved, quickly act upon negative reviews and constantly monitor the reviews. But most importantly focus on the experience of the customer at the hotel establishment.

IR: What are the procedures of ORM in the hotel sector?

IE: A procedure I would advise to manage Online Reputation would be of 5 steps:
30   Compare ratings in review platforms, break down the most mentioned aspects. For instance, room, service, location, break down the reviews by segmentation, type of customer and nationalities. analyze the online reviews and look for points of improvements and benchmarking of the competitive set , distinguishing strengths and weaknesses.

35

IR: What are the most practical and effective tools to manage online reputation in the hotel sector?

IE: This depends on the hotels size and hotel budget. There are many practical tracking tools nowadays; some of the most popular are Revinate, ReviewPro and TrustYou. These costs from 50-200 euro a month accordingly to the package chosen. I would say the most used in Spain is ReviewPro.

40 **IR: Which Review Sites do you consider to be the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason why.**

IE: The most effective review sites at the moment are Booking.com and TripAdvisor. Then we also have Orbitz and Expedia. I would say Booking.com is one of the most reliable sources of reviews since only guests that have booked can write a review.

IR: Which Social Networking Sites do you consider the most effective in the hotel sector? Please reason
45 **why.**

IE: In fact, reviews are also found on social media, so it is important to use the benefits of this as a communication channel. Twitter and Facebook I would say are the most influential at the moment in the hotel sector. Twitter because of its rapid spread so these should be answered quickly. And Facebook since it is one of the most popular sites and allows the share of media such as pictures and
50 videos but also allows giving a rating to a business.

IR: Is there a general statement you would like to add concerning ORM in the hotel sector? Please reason why.

IE: A general statement or advice would to always remember how the experience of the guest at the hotel has consequences in the results of the hotel. See it as a providing an experience not just a stay.
55 And the interaction with the guest is something fundamental. And taking into consideration this, your online reputation should be safe.
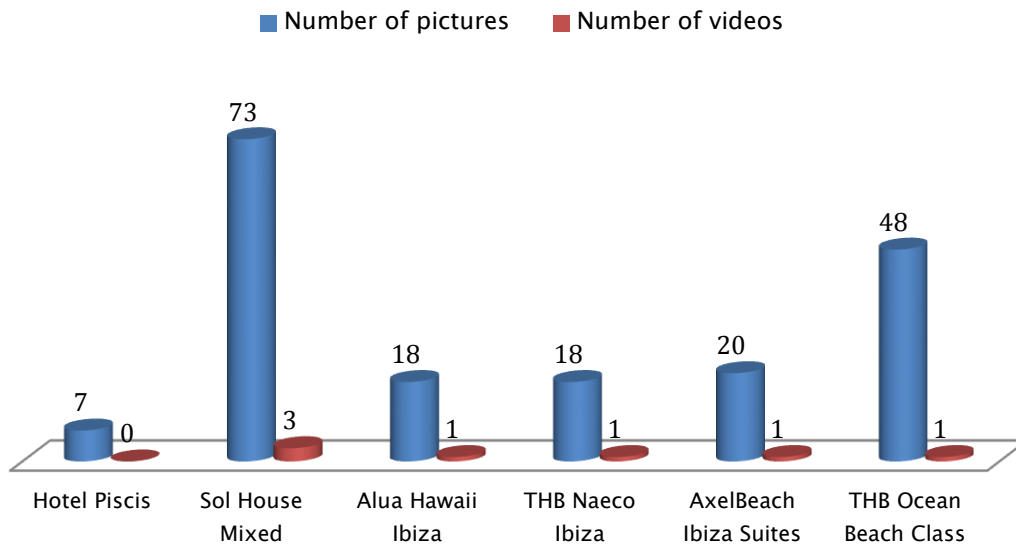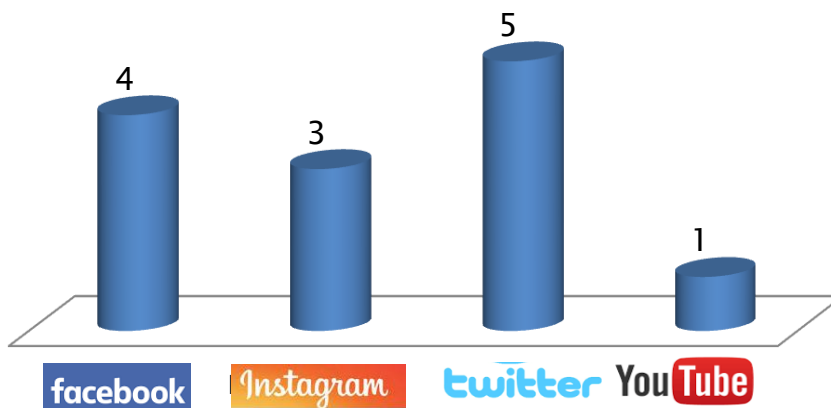
Online presence – own Website

■ Yes   ■ No
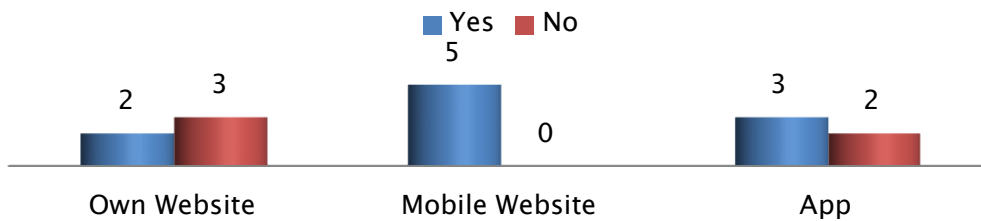
Graph VI.I. Results of online presence of the compset hotels. (own elaboration)

Quantity of Media content

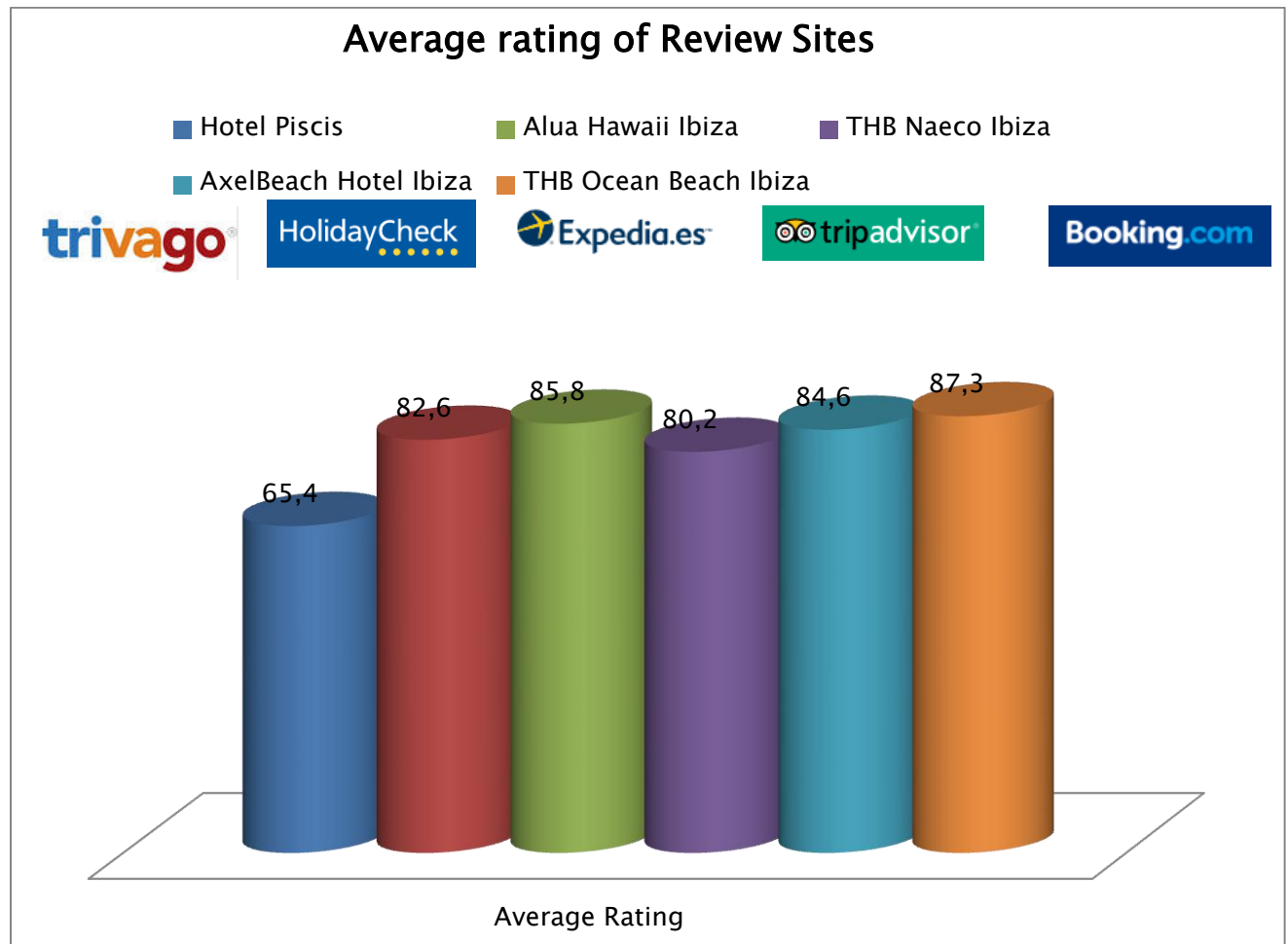**■ Number of pictures   ■ Number of videos**

Graph VI.II. Results of research of media content on Website of competitive set hotels. (own elaboration)

Social Media Presence

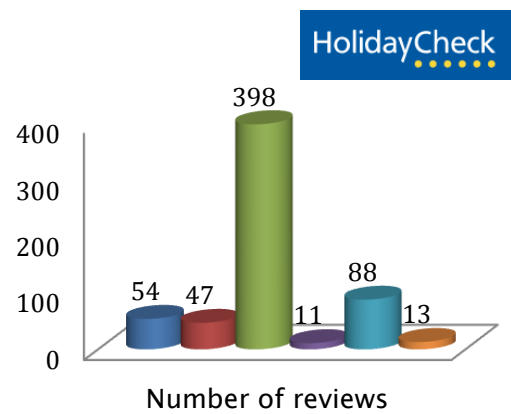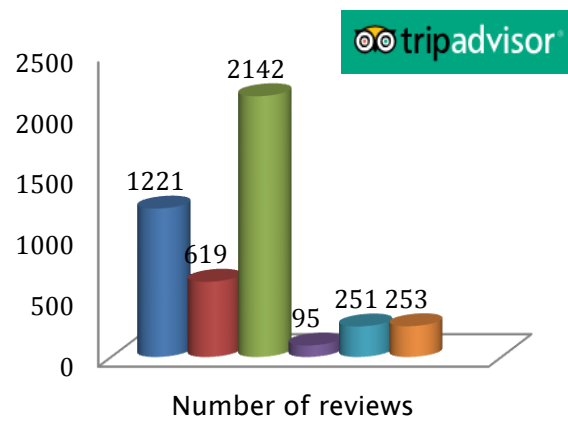Graph VI.III. Result s of research on Social Media involvement of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis.

Average rating of Review Sites

Graph VI.IV Result of desk research on the average rating of the compset hotels on Tripadvisor, Booking, Expedia, HolidayCheck and Trivago. (own elaboration)
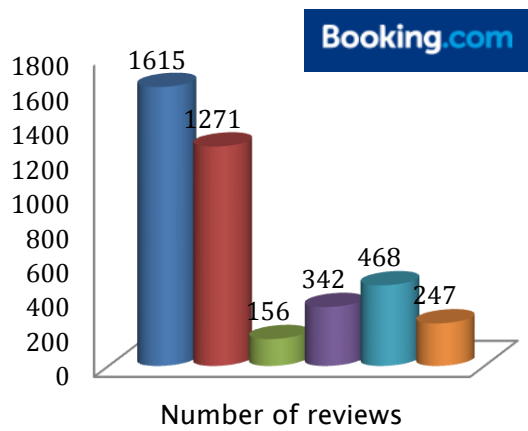
Number of reviews

Figure VI.I. Set of graphs with the results of the research on number of reviews of each hotel on Booking, Tripadvisor, Expedia and HolidayCheck

	Hotel Piscis	Sol House Mixed by Ibiza Rocks	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Ibiza	Axel Beach Ibiza Suites	THB Ocean Beach Class
Website	yes	no	Yes	no chain	yes	no chain
Mobile Website	yes	yes	Yes	yes	yes	Yes
App	no	yes	No	yes	no	Yes
Number of videos	0	3	1	0	1	1
Number of pictures	7	73	18	81	20	48

Table VI.I. Online Presence of Hotel Piscis and its compset. (own elaboration)

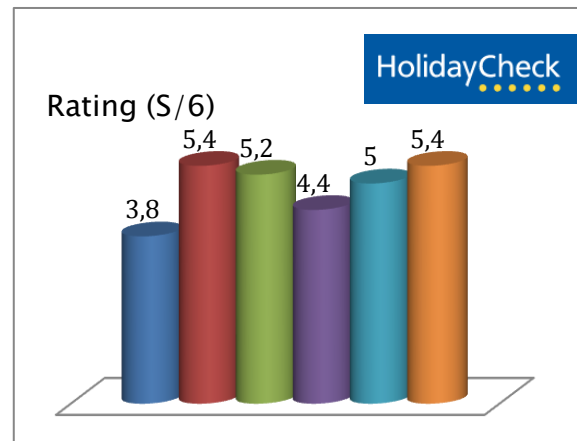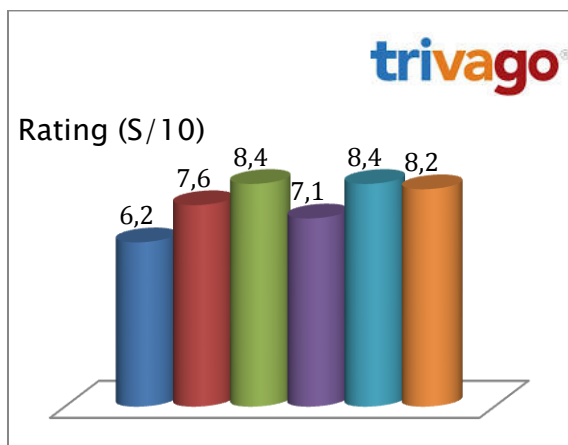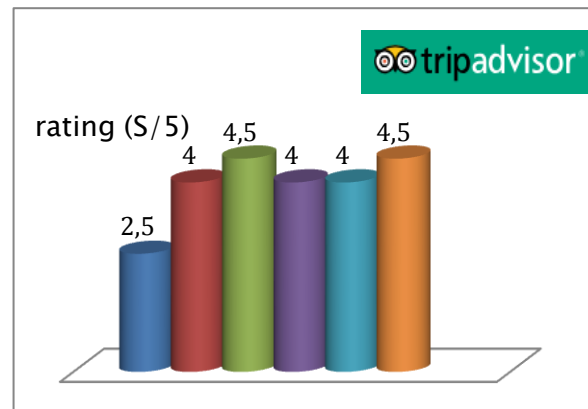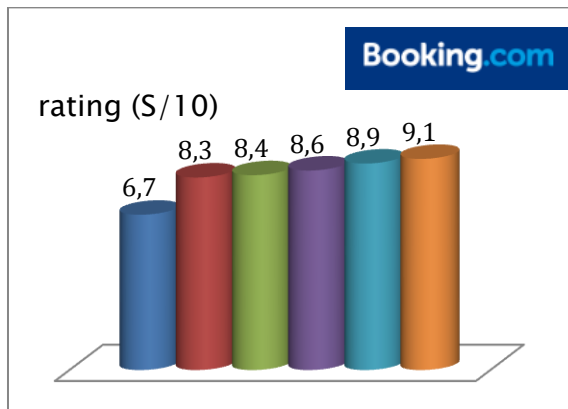|	Hotel Piscis	Sol House Mixed Ibiza	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Ibiza	Axel Beach Ibiza Suites	THB Ocean Beach Class
Facebook	n/a	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Likes	n/a	10436	n/a	1526	4862	1395
Instagram	n/a	Yes	no	yes	no	Yes
Followers	n/a	4431	n/a	900	n/a	1941
Publications	n/a	278	n/a	184	n/a	271
YouTube	yes chain	yes chain	yes chain	yes chain	yes chain	yes own
Videos	23	67	5	30	18	22
Twitter	n/a	Yes	yes	yes	yes	Yes

Table VI.II. Web 2.0 presence of Hotel Piscis and its compset. (own elaboration)

	Hotel Piscis	Sol House Ibiza by Melia	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Ibiza	AxelBeach Ibiza Suites	THB Ocean Beach Class
Tripadvisor (s/5)	50	80	90	80	80	90
Rating	2.5	4	4.5	4	4	4.5
Number of reviews	1221	619	2142	95	251	253
HolidayCheck (s/6)	64	90	87	74	84	90
Rating	3.8	5.4	5.2	4.4	5	5.4
Number of reviews	54	47	398	11	88	13
Booking.com (s/10)	67	83	84	86	89	91
Rating	6.7	8.3	8.4	8.6	8.9	9.1
Number of reviews	1651	1271	156	342	468	247
Trivago (s/10)	62	76	84	71	84	82
Rating	6.2	7.6	8.4	7.1	8.4	8.2
Number of reviews	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Expedia (s/5)	54	84	84	84	90	86
Rating	2.7	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.5	4.3
Number of reviews	139	162	5	25	92	99
Average rating	**65.4**	**82.6**	**85.8**	**80.2**	**84.6**	**87.8**

Table VI.III. Average rating of Hotel Piscis and its compset.
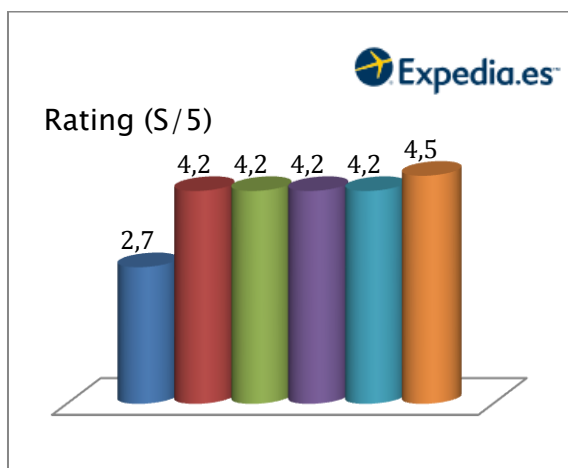
Set of graphs VI.I. Results ratings of Compset Hotels in Tripadvisor, Booking, Trivago, HolidayCheck and Expedia of each hotel of the competitive set of Hotel Piscis.

	Hotel Piscis	Sol House Ibiza by Melia	Alua Hawaii Ibiza	THB Naeco Ibiza	AxelBeach Ibiza Suites	THB Ocean Beach Class
Tripadvisor (s/5)						
Time	within 3 days	within 1 day	within 2 days	n/a	within 1 day	within 1 day
% of response		100%	98%	n/a	98%	98%
title person answering review	Hotel General Manager	Guest relations / General Manager/ Sales Manager	Public Relations Manager	n/a	Hotel General Manager	Hotel General Manager

Table VI.IV. Responding behavior Hotel Piscis and its compset on Tripadvisor. (own elaboration)

APPENDIX VII – PDCA cycle

Act
- Managing Nonconformity
- Improvement
- ISO 9001 Certification
- Cultural and Organizational Aspects
- Total Quality Management
- Environmental Management Systems
- Management System Integration

Plan
- The Quality Concept and Objectives
- Statutory Considerations
- Product Liability and Product Safety
- Training for Quality
- The Control of Design

Check
- An Introduction to Statistics
- Control Charts
- Inspection
- Functional Testing
- Inspection and Measurement Equipment
- Metrology
- Quality Audits and Reviews
- Quality- and Safety-related Cost
- Benchmarking

Do
- Procurement
- Just-in-Time Supplies
- Process Capability
- Product Reliability
- Materials Handling
- Servicing
- Service Quality
- Documentations and Records
- Controlling Changes
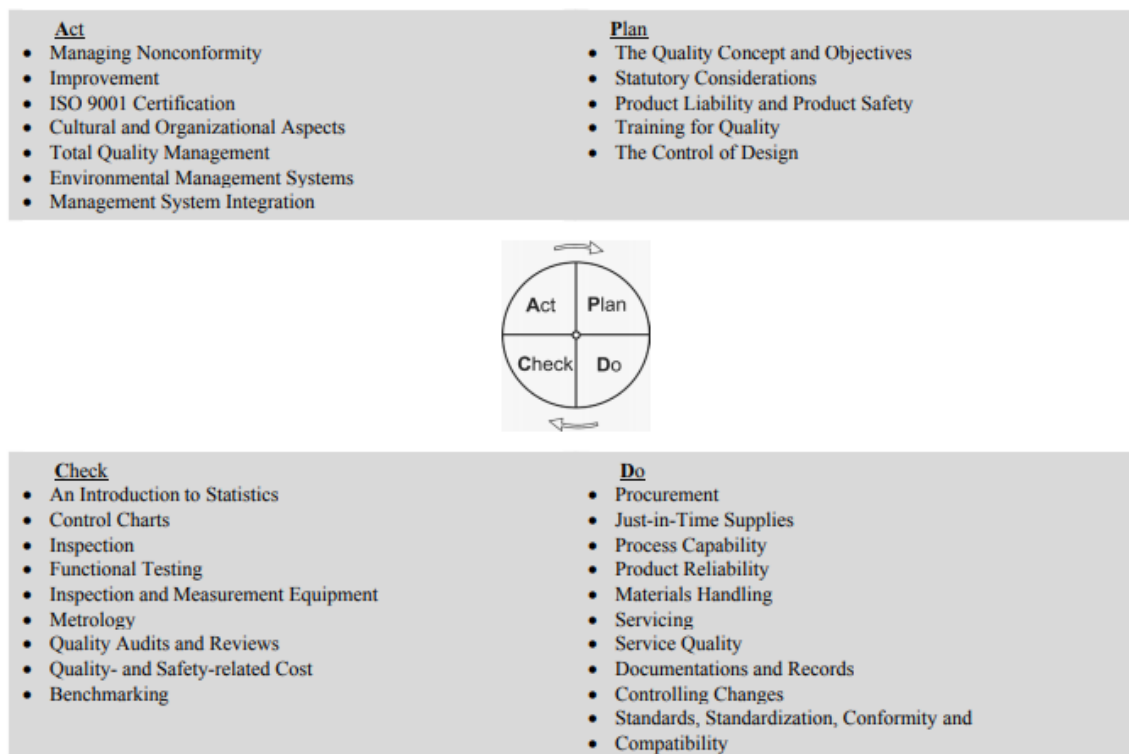- Standards, Standardization, Conformity and
- Compatibility

Figure V. The PDcA cycle (Source: Sokovic,M., Pavletic,D., Pipan,K., 2010)