Young Professional Semester-Portfolio

Attracting Leisure Guests Through Social Media

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Social media marketing plan for Holiday Inn Hotel, Plovdiv Bulgaria

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Chapter	Part	Changes
Substantiation	Stakeholders	**Overcoming Stakeholder Resistance** Pages: 39; 40
Substantiation	Stakeholders	**Part Added: Broader Impact** Pages: 39; 40

Declaration of own work

I hereby declare that:

- I am fully informed about the Professional Product PF 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: Victoria Stoyanova
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Acknowledgements

Dear reader, I would like to start this paragraph differently than the usual "cliché". First of all, thank you for going to put a lot of time and effort right now into reading my Young Professional Semester Project.

During the past 4 years of my Hotel Management studies at Saxion University of Applied Sciences, I was thinking from time to time if I will ever make it. If I will ever come to the point where I need to prepare to finish my studies and write the (back then) Thesis report. Now that this time finally came to me, I dare to say I feel scared and nervous.

I would like to express my gratefulness and appreciation for all the people behind this project. My Saxion tutors and the management team of Holiday Inn Hotel Plovdiv, Bulgaria. Without you, nothing would be the same. Your endless help and motivation came to me in very difficult times for the whole world- the COVID-19 crisis. Having you by my side made this project a reality and my path to the professional field looking more real and approachable.

This project means a lot to me, not only because I got to work on a very interesting and engaging topic but because of the great team which showed me a different perspective of the world.

For me this is another path which I had to cross, it wasn't always easy or pleasant but fully worth it. A path which developed me into the Young Professional I want to be. Always learning and achieving!

Victoria Stoyanova
Hilversum, 11th of January 2021

Introduction

Nowadays, we live in a fully digital era where technology is everywhere around us and sometimes, we all wonder: what is the best way to integrate it in our businesses? and how can we earn and expand through it? Social media is implemented in each aspect of our lives and it grows each day. Many businesses found success through it using different strategies. Therefore, the purpose of this social media marketing project is to create the most feasible and effective strategy for Holiday Inn hotel located in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

This project is built around different steps which aim to give a clear solution to the management issue. The management question of this professional product is: *How can Holiday Inn Hotel increase the percentage of leisure guests through online platforms and GDS channels and influence the booking decision.* This issue is derived from the current situation at Holiday Inn hotel. The project consists of 3 parts: The professional product which is the social media marketing plan itself, the substantiation of the marketing plan and the third chapter is the Professional Performance which looks into the performance of the young professional. The social media marketing plan gives clarity on the target group of Holiday Inn based on which a social media strategy is created. In the Substantiation part, you can read more about the choices which were made to come with solutions for the client Holiday Inn.

I: The Social Media Marketing Plan

1.1 Segmentation

For a social media marketing plan to be achievable and relevant it is essential if the target group of Holiday Inn hotel is known and made clear. For this purpose, the Segmentation, Targeting Positioning model of (Kotler, Wong, Saunders, & Armsrong, 2004) will be used. The model consists of major variables for segmenting customer markets. Below you can find the illustration of the model.

The target group of Holiday Inn was researched through 2 types of surveys. The first Survey focused only on existing guests of Holiday Inn; the second survey focused only on potential guests of the hotel. The results from the first survey will be represented below. Besides the surveys, interviews with several experts were held. Through them, information about the target group was obtained as well. Below you can find the analysis of the target group and based on it a persona will be developed for better representation.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS TARGET GROUP
When looking at the results from the first survey and two of the experts' interviews it can be concluded that the target group of Holiday Inn are (91.43%) Female. They are between 25-34 and 35-49 years old (37.14%). The income is from €0- €15 000 (50%). In the interview with the General Manager of Holiday Inn she stated "most of our guests are Europeans. Mainly Europeans. We have small percentage Asian guests, very small like 2-3%" (see 78-79). She also added, "They are mostly middle-aged between 30, 30+-50 years old" (see 80-81). And their nationalities are "from the Netherlands, Romania, United States, Italy and Germany" (see 82- 85).   The second interviewee, the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn also contributed with information about the demographics of the target group. She stated: "Our guests are mostly from Europe" see (2.73) "They are between 25-55 years old, and their income is higher than the medium standard of Bulgaria" see (2.79- 2.80).
BUSINESS AND LEISURE STAYS, RATE OF STAY
The second part of the research focused on the reason for the stay of the guests. Around 30.30% of the respondents stayed at Holiday Inn for business. And 66.67% stated that they did not stay at Holiday Inn for business purposes. 75.00% of the respondents stayed at Holiday Inn for leisure. Another 21.88% said they did not stay at Holiday Inn for leisure purposes. 3.13% stayed for other purposes. 81.25% of the guests rated their stay as Excellent, 18.75% rated it as good. The General Manager of the hotel mentioned "mainly our guests are travelling for business, business in town" see (99) "They are mainly the contemporary traveller type of guests, this means nowadays traveller, they demand good service, sincere relationships and well authentic service" see (102- 104). The Marketing Manager added "the guests are travelling for work for usually a short period of time let's say one, two, three, four nights up to seven. Also, a lot of companies send us guests that stay for sometimes from 90 to 100 days" see (2.73-2.77). Besides these two respondents, the Front Office manager was also interviewed and contributed with "when there are events in the city, we have several reservations connected to them" see (3.93-3.94).
SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOUR
The third part of the research focused on the social media behaviour of existing guests of Holiday Inn hotel. This includes if they use social media for accommodation research, which social media they use mostly, what kind of posts they look at and the most engaging types of posts in their opinion. The results from the first survey show that 40.63% of the existing guests of Holiday Inn, sometimes use social media for accommodation research. Their social media choice is Facebook with 56.41% and Instagram with 33.33%. The types of posts they like to check are carousel photos with 20.97% and videos with 16.13%. the most engaging types of posts are again carousel posts with 26.15%, stories 23.08% and videos 23.08%.   Another important question was at what time of the day they are active on social media. 30.00% are active during 19:00-21:00 o'clock in the evening and other 28.00% said are active during 22:00- 00:00 o'clock. As how much time they spend for accommodation research 85.19% said they spend 1-2 hours

and the most interesting types of posts are posts including information about the accommodation services 44.44% and facilities 29.63%.

In the interview with the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn, she added: "so the behaviour of the guests that have been with us is let's say, if I understand the question well, they are active, they follow us, and like the posts" see (2.144- 2.145). She also added that the guests use Facebook and Instagram from what she has seen so far. See (2.154). She pointed out that the older generation still uses Facebook more than Instagram, see (2.212- 2.214).

About the active times of their guests on social media, the Marketing Manager said "and I believe its more effective when it comes like you pointed out at five o'clock or after five o'clock. I think it's engaging to people more because probably they have also more online time then" see (2.317- 2.318)

HOLIDAY INN SOCIAL MEDIA INTEREST

Another aspect connected to social media was the interest of existing Holiday Inn guests towards its social media channels. Around 56.67% of the respondents said that they checked the hotel social media channels after booking and 33.33% said they did not check the channels. The information they found on their social media channels was mainly information about the hotel (33.33%). And 76.47% said that the information was useful, followed by 17.65% who said that the information was "maybe" useful. The respondents suggested adding more interactivity like polls and more posts to the social media channels of Holiday Inn.

The Front Office manager pointed out that their guests most of the times are very well informed about the hotel because they check online for information: "Actually, what I can see is that most of the guests, which know about Holiday Inn as brand the, the tendency is that they know what to expect. And they have already checked about the services about everything online. So, they know what to expect. They know what they're they are getting. And they don't have a lot of questions actually, because yeah. They know where to check before they come. So, most of the questions from the tourists are coming from the walk-in guests. They didn't check yet. They, they didn't confirm any information about the hotel see (3.98- 3.104)

As the target group of Holiday Inn was analyzed based on the results from the first survey and the expert interviews, the second survey will be analyzed as well. The second survey was distributed through the social media channels Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn and the communication channels WhatsApp and Viber. The second survey's data is essential since it is giving information about the potential future guests of Holiday Inn. This way the social media marketing plan will be developed based on both target groups interests for optimal results.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS TARGET GROUP

When looking at the results from the second survey it can be seen that 75.56% are females and 22.22% are males. Their average income per year is from €0- €15 000 and the nationalities are as follow: 75.56% Bulgarian, Romanian 13.33% and Dutch 6.67%. The countries are Bulgaria 62.22%, Romania 6.67% and the Netherlands 26.67%.

BUSINESS AND LEISURE STAYS AND CHANNELS

Around 22.22% of the respondents said that they are travelling 1-2 times per year for business purposes and 35.56% said that they are travelling for leisure 5+ times per year.

The channels they use for business are 13.95% online travel agent and 23.26% said they are using their work to book business stay. And the channels they use for booking leisure travels are again Online Travel Agent 37.78% and the website of the accommodation 26.67%.

SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOUR

The respondents said that they are always using social media in their free time and they are active between 1-2 hours (45.45%) and 3-4 hours (45.45%) per day on social media. Around 31.11% of the respondents said that they are using social media for accommodation research after booking their stay. The most used channels are Facebook 37.93%, Instagram 36.21% and YouTube with 6.90%.

The most engaging posts on social media for them are single pictures with text 28.13% and stories 23.44%. followed by videos 21.88%. Regarding social media activity and the time of the day, the respondents said that they are active between 19:00- 21:00 (26.67%) and 22:00- 00:00 (25.33%).

When it comes to research about accommodation the average time, they spend is 1-2 hours per day (90.63%). The most helpful types of posts which help them on a booking decision are videos of the property 25.00% and carousel pictures with text 18.42%. On the question if they follow influencers, 43.75% answered "sometimes" and 18.75% said, "hardly ever". Around 72.73% follow their accommodation advice.

The created persona for the target group you can find in *Appendix I*

1.2 Targeting

The target market for Holiday Inn Plovdiv has been made clear during the expert interviews and the surveys. To sum up, quickly the target group consists of:

Gender	Age	Nationality	Income
Female- 91.43%	25-35 -year- old	Bulgarian Romanian Dutch	€0-€15 000 0-30 000BGN
Male- 8.57%	35-49-year-old	German Austrian	
		Italian	

The full description you can find in Appendix I

The guests of Holiday Inn are described as the Contemporary traveller: small business, leisure and family. They are characterized as true to themselves; their relationships are sincere and real; value is their memories and moments and craves enjoyable moments in both business and leisure. (IHG, 2016)

Targeting this specific group can be found quite challenging in these dynamic times we live in. Therefore, targeting on social media is considered one of the most efficient ways of reaching the desired target group. Below you will find some practical steps when it comes to targeting. Full description and details can be found further in this social media marketing plan.

1. Determining the users already following on social media channels (Instagram, Facebook etc.)
2. Determining their demographics such as age, country, interests.
3. Checking how much the engagement rate from them is. How much they follow and like the posts being made.
4. Deciding on the types of posts which will engage the audience
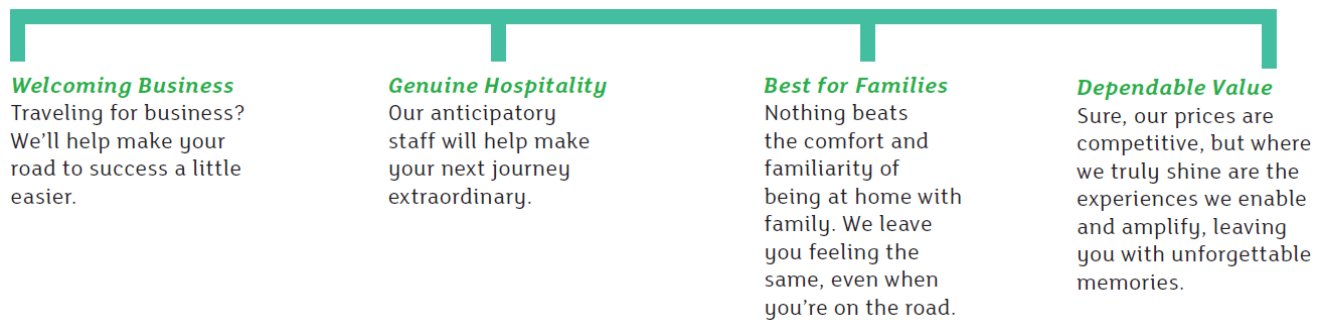5. Choosing paid vs organic social media ads

These steps are just the beginning of a correct social media targeting according to Chenn (2020)

2. Branding & Identity

2.1 Branding

For the purpose of the social media marketing plan, the Holiday Inn brand has to be understood and made clear. This way creating marketing strategy will be much more in line with the mission and vision of the hotel and properly represented to its target group- the contemporary traveller. Holiday Inn has over 1, 200 hotels worldwide and it is the most widely recognized lodging brand in the world. The brand offers the essential services which every business and leisure guest need. It prides itself with one of a kind open lobby, amazing Food and Beverage options and professional, warm-hearted staff members. Holiday Inn offers a casual and comfortable atmosphere and therefore its social media should represent these values. (IHG, n.d.)

The four pillars which the brand is focusing on its social media are:

Welcoming Business
Traveling for business? We'll help make your road to success a little easier.

Genuine Hospitality
Our anticipatory staff will help make your next journey extraordinary.

Best for Families
Nothing beats the comfort and familiarity of being at home with family. We leave you feeling the same, even when you're on the road.

Dependable Value
Sure, our prices are competitive, but where we truly shine are the experiences we enable and amplify, leaving you with unforgettable memories.

(IHG, 2016)

Further in this social media marketing plan, you will find the business objectives set and elaborate social media strategy. Keeping in mind the core values of Holiday Inn will definitely reach the desired target group and win their social engagement.

2.2 Identity

Since Holiday Inn is part of Intercontinental Hotel Group, its characteristics will be presented.

IHG contains 17 well- known hotel brands which are focusing on upper- scale brand as well as midscale hotel brands. The core characteristics of the company are to execute their established and successful strategy at a faster pace and accelerate growth for their brands and owners. (InterContinental Hotels Group PLC, n.d.)

Their value creation states: delivering industry-leading medium-term net rooms growth

1. Build & leverage scale
2. Strengthen loyalty programme
3. Enhance revenue delivery
4. Evolve owner proposition
5. Optimize our preferred portfolio of brands for owners & guests

3. Social Media Marketing Objectives

Nowadays, business objectives are significantly important when a business wants to grow or succeed. The objectives have to be clear and unique for the business. This way they will ensure they are measurable and achievable. The objectives are the guideposts including specific action steps on the way to achieving long- term goals. As (Woodruff, 2019) states in her article businesses which do not define their long- term goals and create working objectives, will slower their development compare to other businesses which already defined them.

Considering that, the social media objectives of Holiday Inn will be developed through SMART outline. As a small recap, the management question is being repeated and it states:

How can Holiday Inn Hotel increase the percentage of leisure guests through online platforms and GDS channels and influence the booking decision.

To answer the management question present solution to the client's problem: decreased percentage of leisure guests. The following objectives have been determined:

Social Media Objectives:

Social Media Objectives		
In 2 years from now Holiday Inn Hotel will have its followers increased on Facebook by 50% and its post engagement by 30%	In 1 year from now, Holiday Inn Hotel will have its followers increased on Instagram by 50% and its post engagement by 30%	In 2 years from now, Holiday Inn will have its local community by 30% more engaged on social media channels Facebook and Instagram
There will be at least 3 new posts on Monday Wednesday and Friday made in the Instagram page of Holiday Inn, continuing for at least 1 year.	There will be at least 2 new posts on Monday, Thursday and Friday made on the Facebook page of Holiday Inn for at least 1 year.	In 1 year from now, Holiday Inn will increase the traffic to its website by 20% through social media channels.
Social Media Financial Objectives:		
In 1 year from now, Holiday Inn will have its revenue increased by bookings from social media by 10%	In 2 years from now, Holiday Inn will have its revenue increased by bookings from social media by 20%	
Occupancy Objectives		
In 2 years from now, Holiday Inn will have its occupancy rate increased by 50% during low season and 30% increased during high season.	In 1 year from now, Holiday Inn will have 40% more leisure guests who booked influenced by social media marketing.	

The SMART objectives are divided into three categories: social media, financial and occupancy. It is important to have the objective so that the results of the social media marketing plan can be properly tracked during the time.

After conducting expert interviews with the Management Team of Holiday Inn, several positive and negative sides of managing social media have been determined. The SWOT model has been used to clearly represent the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which Holiday Inn faces at the moment regarding its social media channels.

4.1 Strengths:

During the interview with Gergana Georgieva, the GM of Holiday Inn it was found that despite the COVID-19 crisis the hotel has good results when it comes to occupancy rate "We in Holiday Inn Plovdiv are in top five, with good, good results, for the last two months we have an occupancy rate of 38%" see (20-21). Moreover, the togetherness of the team and their mutual impact is the key for the good results of the hotel "I was lucky to have good colleagues, to share my thoughts with them and to develop and make such good results" see (58- 59).

4.2 Weaknesses:

One of the main weaknesses is the higher-than-average pricing of Holiday Inn "Leisure, they stay one or two nights, they travel, the primary motivation is for vacation. And they are often characterized by staying in nice hotels but I believe our pricing is what drives them to search for something cheaper" see (167- 169). Besides the pricing the Marketing Manager, Lora Koritareva mentioned ": within the four years that they have opened a hotel not much attention has been paid to social media as we also attract in the social media of the hotel" see (2.135- 2.136). Moreover, considering the results from the first survey, the social media of Holiday Inn is not properly distributed among all guests' nationalities. Around 90% of the respondents who participated in the survey are coming from Bulgaria. The survey was distributed through the social media channels of Holiday Inn hotel.

4.3 Opportunities

Looking at Holiday Inn social media activity, Gergana mentioned "this is a very good idea to add more information in the social media channels like activities in the city, museums and interesting places to visit. Something to add and see how our guests or our readers will react, because we do have sports events. We do have whatever leisure events and attractions the city can offer but we don't include them in our social media and it is very good to be done" (see 179- 182). Another opportunity is attracting leisure tourist groups through social media as the Marketing Manager Lora mentioned: "My colleagues also previously in the good times before COVID-19 had touristic groups mostly around Christmas, New Year, and Easter and then during the summer around some, you know events, international events in the city, we had also tour groups those, of course, interested in sightseeing, but generally our guests are coming here for a brief visit". See (2.88-2.90)

4.4 Threats:

The biggest threat of Holiday Inn it is still the most popular Online Travel Agent: Booking.com. Most leisure guests still prefer booking their stay through the OTA as Gergana mentioned during the interview "But, unfortunately, or not, they basically, our guests use booking.com, which is the most popular online travel agent. I said, unfortunately, because they're very huge and very, I would say, powerful in tourism and very preferred, because of course, we are franchised hotel. We also pay a fee using the franchise name. And again, we pay a fee to booking.com. So, if a guest books through booking, we pay a double fee. So that's why I say, well, unfortunately. What my target is to encourage guests to book direct." See (144- 147).

Summary:

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Strong and supportive team - Eager to develop - Sharing organic content on social media more regularly than before - Sharing information about the city - Trying to engage with guests - Holiday Inn is a well-recognized brand worldwide	- Higher pricing - Social media channels did not exist during the first 4 years of the hotel opening - Social media not distributed among all guests' nationalities
Opportunities (external)	**Threats**
- Located in the most historical city of Bulgaria - The city offers many events and activities - The city offers sports events - Holiday Inn is located close to one of the biggest event venues - Managing Linked In profile	- Most leisure bookings are made via booking.com - The future opening of DoubleTree by Hilton

Competitors:

After the analysis of the micro and macro environment of Holiday Inn and the PEST analysis of Bulgaria, it is time to evaluate the competitors. For this purpose, Michael Porter's 5 Forces model for analyzing the competitiveness of the business environment will be used. Porter's 5 Forces model suggests that organizations should keep a close watch on their rivals but should rather look beyond the actions of their competitors and examine the other factors which could impact the business environment. (Porter, 1979)

With this Holiday Inn should take into consideration a few external stakeholders such as the media, customers, Online Travel Agents, competitors and closely monitor them. When looking to one of Porter's five forces such as the threat of new entrants it could be said that the industry rivalry is high. This is due to a large number of competitors for Holiday Inn such as all the hotels in Plovdiv which are part of a brand: Ramada Trimontium, Best Western Premier and the newest competitor Doubletree by Hilton which is expected to open its doors soon. These competitors have similar target group as Holiday Inn and offer approximately the same facilities or more which makes them highly competitive in the industry. Ramada Trimontium Hotel is located in the centre of Plovdiv and it can be considered high competition to Holiday Inn because of its location, Spa services and parking. Besides that, Ramada Trimontium is not as active as Holiday Inn on social media. The hotel does not have an Instagram account and it only has a Facebook page which is lacking content and engaging posts.

Best Western Premier is also one of the competitors of Holiday Inn. The hotel is located nearby Holiday Inn which makes it a direct competitor. Best Western Premier also has a gym, a conference centre, rental car and airport transfers. The hotel has Instagram and Facebook pages which are not very active and lack engaging posts. This can be seen as an opportunity for Holiday Inn to gain more leisure guests also through its social media channels.

Besides the hotel brands mentioned above, Holiday Inn's competitor is Airbnb's located in Plovdiv. There are several Airbnb's located near Holiday Inn which can be considered as a threat and high competition. The positive side is that these accommodation places can be found only on the website of Airbnb and they do not support social media channels. The key for Holiday Inn is to gain high engagement on social media and the local community as well.

5. Social Media Marketing Strategy.

For Holiday Inn to gain higher percentage followers, engagement and organic traffic to its social media channels a clear strategy have to be determined. The following model will be used while developing the strategy: RACE model. This model is used to provide companies with a simple digital marketing structure or omnichannel communications plan. It is structured around the classical marketing funnel. (Chaffey, 2020)

1. **Plan:**
   The start of the phase Plan is by creating this social media marketing plan for Holiday Inn. It was initiated after the General Manager of Holiday Inn determined the management problem- a low percentage of leisure guests.

2. **Reach:**
   The second phase is examining the target group their demographics and interests and reaching them through social media. The organic and paid promotion will be used for the purpose.

3. **Act:**
   Start of the engagement game on social media. One of the most important steps in achieving SMART objectives.

4. **Convert:**
   In this phase, the follower is turned into a guest of Holiday Inn. The team of Holiday Inn has to contribute to it with engaging content.

5. **Engage:**
   Continuing engaging followers who are already guests of Holiday Inn is as beneficial as potential guests. This way they might bring new followers and even guests.

The social media marketing strategy is dedicated towards both existing and potential guests of Holiday Inn. Further in the social media plan

6. Integrated Promotional Mix
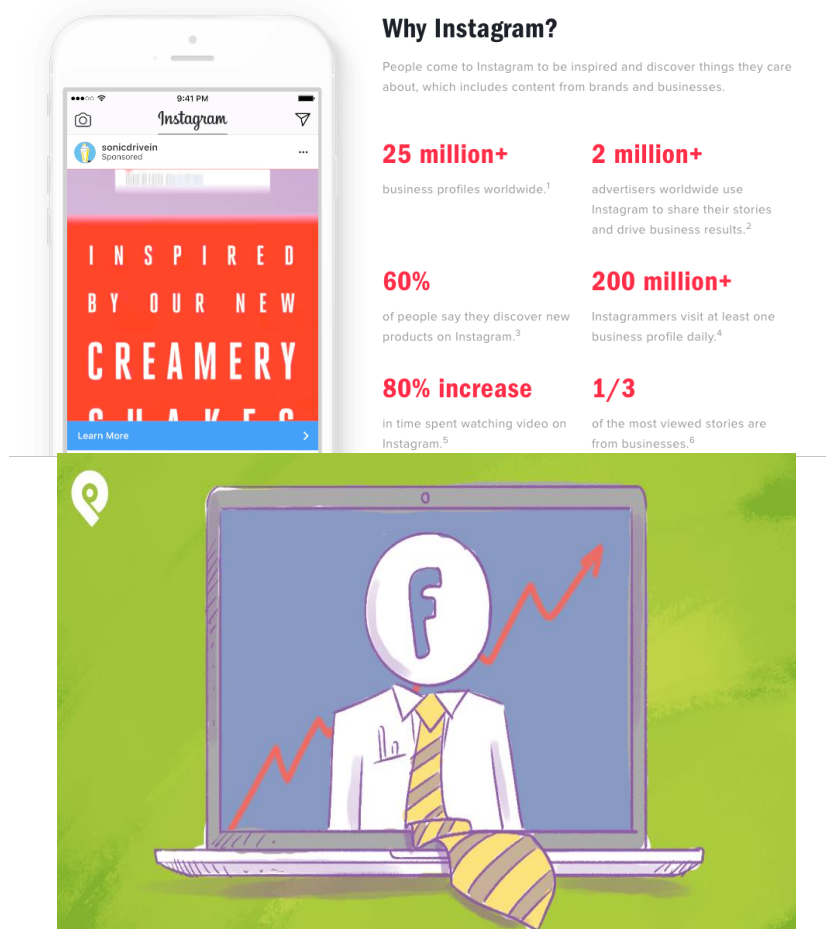
6.1 Platforms

Nowadays, social media is used in almost every aspect of our lives. Therefore, knowing which is the right social media for Holiday Inn is very important. Being where most guests are, is the initial step of achieving the goals set. According to Zajac (2020), Facebook is still one of the most used platforms with its 2.45billion active users. However, the page's posts are not seeing engagement or click-throughs as it used to be anymore. Overall, organic reach on Facebook has dropped to just 5-6% for Pages.

After Facebook, it comes Instagram, the second most popular social media site for daily use. Every 6 in 10 users of Instagram log in once per day and 21% log in at least once per week (Zajac, 2020).

- 83% of Instagram users discover new products and services on the platform.
- 81% of Instagram users say they actively research new products or services.
- 80% of Instagram users say that the app helps them make buying decisions

Knowing this information about two of the most used social media platforms, it is clear that Holiday Inn will use both Instagram and Facebook. The conducted literature review shows that Facebook is popular among grown-ups such as the Millennial Generation while Instagram is popular among Generation- Z.

(Parkinson, 2020)

Why Instagram?

People come to Instagram to be inspired and discover things they care about, which includes content from brands and businesses.

25 million+
business profiles worldwide.[1]

2 million+
advertisers worldwide use Instagram to share their stories and drive business results.[2]

60%
of people say they discover new products on Instagram.[3]

200 million+
Instagrammers visit at least one business profile daily.[4]

80% increase
in time spent watching video on Instagram.[5]

1/3
of the most viewed stories are from businesses.[6]

Each posting on social media has to be in line with the Holiday Inn goals and values. The posts should focus on real and authentic information without bias, judgmental, political or anti-racial messages or hints. Keeping in mind that the franchisor IHG keeps a close watch on the representation of the brand on the internet. Below you can find a table including all specifications a post should contain for Facebook and Instagram.

Facebook & Instagram:

Topic	Type of Post	Content Suggestion
New holiday promotion	Single picture with text	Depending on the season and type of promotion, keep voice cheerful and attractive to the audience. Research shows that if the tone of voice is cheerful the click-through rate is increased by 15%.
Last chance promotion	Single picture with integrated text and/ or a story	Since it is last chance promotion focus on the engagement. Attracting words and visuals. This way influence the booking decision could reach 10-20% per post.
St Valentine's day promotion	Carrousel picture with text. A story including a short video.	St. Valentine's posts are usually focusing on the ambience of the hotel together with some promotion (if applicable). To be attractive, the focus could go to what does the hotel offer for this special day. Targets are couples and families. Study shows that almost 40% of bookings for St. Valentines come from social media.
Musical events in Plovdiv	Videos with text	Could be short introduction videos or trailers on how will the event go.
Cultural events in Plovdiv	Videos with text	Could be short introduction videos or trailers on how will the event go.
Sports events in Plovdiv	Videos with text and stories	Could be short introduction videos or trailers on how will the event go.
Business fairs in Plovdiv	Single pictures with text and stories	These posts are especially for business guests who need straightforward information. Showing meeting rooms and business facilities are much more likely to attract business guests during business fairs and events. Businesses often look at social media for hotel recommendations. Almost 15% book after research on social media.
Art galleries events	Carousel photos and stories	For the art fans, Plovdiv can offer a lot, therefore posts including art event happening in the city can higher the engagement and click-through rate of a post. Posts could represent some of the local artists and their work (if possible).
Art events	Stories with single pictures with text	Plovdiv is also known for its craft events, where different artists showcase their work. Posts could include more information about the even and be combined with a promotion which is currently running at the hotel.
New facilities in the hotel	Carousel photos and stories	Carousel posts allow uploading several pictures which is useful for representing new facilities or other novelties at the hotel.
New items in the restaurant's menu	Stories, carousel pictures with text	Mention the ingredients, including high-resolution photos to engage the audience. Keep tone cheerful and encouraging. Research shows that pictures of

		food and beverages are up to 30% more attractive than any other post.
Introduction of new team members of Holiday Inn	Sigle picture with text	Appreciating the joining of a new staff member will show the audience that hospitality in Holiday Inn is in the first place.
General information about the hotel	Single picture with text	Keep the audience well informed about the location of the hotel or the nearest highway for instance.

Hashtags (trending in hospitality)	
#holidayinnhotelplovdiv #PlovdivBulgaria #4starthotelsbulgaria	#hospitality #hotel #travel #hotels #restaurant #interiordesign #tourism #hospitalityindustry #food #design #hotellife #hotelmanagement #hotelier #hospitalitymanagement #vacation #hospitalitydesign #travelgram #hoteldesign #luxury #restaurants #chef #architecture #bar #holiday #events #business #luxuryhotel #hoteliers
#hospitality #hotel #travel #hotels #restaurant #interiordesign #tourism #hospitalityindustry #food #design #hotellife #hotelmanagement #hotelier #hospitalitymanagement #vacation #hospitalitydesign #travelgram #hoteldesign #luxury #restaurants #chef #architecture #bar #holiday #events #business #luxuryhotel #hoteliers	#instagood #hotelroom #catering #foodie #interior #education #love #boutiquehotel #cheflife #cocktails #lifestyle #staysafe #hospitalitylife #management #restaurantdesign #retail #bartender #luxurylifestyle #instatravel #service #photography #relax #interiors #marketing #horeca #cafe #hospital
Emojis/ Stickers	
The usage of emojis should be in line with the branding of Holiday Inn. Usage of emojis and stickers which enrich the meaning of a message. Refrain from stickers which might give a different meaning to the post	
Fonts (presented)	
There are several types of fonts for Instagram and Facebook. In Appendices, you can find images for better representation.	

*For visuals of content, suggestions check **Appendix II.*** These posts are taken from the Instagram accounts of HoxtonHotels, TownHallHotel and OsbourneHotel

*For post fonts check **Appendix II***:

Table with additional hospitality trending topics

Trending Hospitality Topics	
- Dining tips - Day trips ideas - Reading recommendations - Share a recipe	- Give weather report (especially when its good weather) - Best selfie made at the hotel - Family picture at the hotel
- Positive media posts about the hotel's location - Facts about the hotel's location - Mention sustainability (IHG Green Promise)	- Behind the scenes posts - Best guest reviews

6.2.1 Frequency, type of posting and time of day:

Frequency

Social media is changing every day; therefore, algorithms do not always work for every account on social media. Being consistent with posting is always a good start. After doing some literature research on the topic the following frequency of posting was determined:

- Posting should occur at least 3-4 times per week including only high-quality content
- Posting of stories should occur at least once per 2 days, again the quality is the key

Organic or Paid Promotion

Organic posts could be turned into paid promotions. How often should a paid promotion be done and for how long depends on the type of posts and its aim. For instance, a promotion at the hotel is good to be promoted on social media for at least 2 weeks before it expires. This way a bigger audience could be reached. How often a paid promotion should run is to be determined by the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn.

Time of Day:

Based on the results of both conducted survey the posting times have been determined. This includes the time of the day when users of the target group of Holiday Inn are mostly active. Both existing and potential guests are active on social media during the same time of the day

Mornings

Between 10:00- 12:00 o'clock

Evenings

Between 19:00- 21:00 o'clock

22:00- 00:00 o'clock

6.2.2 Tone of Voice of Holiday Inn

Based on a company report it is made clear what is the tone of voice for Holiday Inn.

Posts should be *inviting*, meaning that everyone is welcome at Holiday Inn such as kids, grandparents and other family members. *Enthusiastic*, meaning that there is always eager to explore new places. *Approachable*, if the guests need assistance or any other request, the staff is always happy to help. *Familiar*, always there to hear an interesting story from a guest or share their picture on Instagram. *Confident*, in every content posted on social media. (IHG, 2016)

6.3 Person in Charge

The person in charge of the social media channels is the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn, Lora Koritareva.

7. Timescale and Resources

7.1 Resources

The social media marketing plan can be quite pricey if there is no clear strategy for posting and determining the goal of each post. The budget was created for the team of Holiday Inn to give a clear view of the costs involved in executing the plan. The financial part can be found in the Substantiation report. Chapter Finance (click to redirect).

Gantt chart overview of creating posts was created to support the team of Holiday Inn and keep an overview of social media tasks. The Gantt chart is made for 3 months ahead and the team of Holiday Inn can adjust it according to each month. See *Appendix III*

8. Evaluation and Control

For evaluation of the Social Media Marketing plan and if the desired results have been achieved the SMART goals formulated in part: Social Media Marketing Objectives will be used. The Marketing Manager can track the results each month by creating Reports on Facebook and Instagram. An example of these reports can be found in *Appendix IV*: **(**Image 1.1 & Image 1.2).

Dear Holiday Inn Team, thank you for the opportunity to work with you!

I am more than looking forward to seeing this Social Media Marketing Plan in action 😊

See you soon!

Section II. The Substantiation of the Social Media Marketing Plan. Happy Reading!
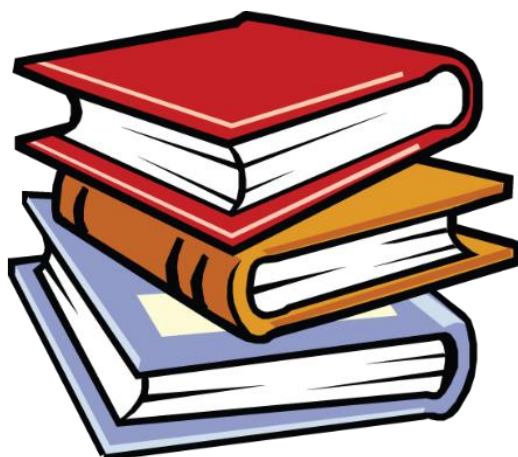
II. The Substantiation of the Social Media Marketing Plan

I. Introduction

In this chapter, there will be an extensive substantiation of the professional product. Questions like "How?" and "Why?" will be answered, and of course, there will be a clear link between the product and the initial management question. The table below serves as a guideline, to help the reader understand the substantiation of the product and to find all the necessary information from the two chapters "The Social Media Marketing Plan" and "The Substantiation of the Professional Product".

In this chapter, you can find the extensive substantiation of the professional product. The table below gives a guideline for the reader to find all the necessary information for the Social Media Marketing plan and the Substantiation

Assessment criterion	Relevant information within the professional product	Relevant information within substantiation
The professional answers the client's question with an appropriate and substantiated professional product.	This information can be found in the professional product itself. Parts are: Social Media Marketing Strategy and Integrated Promotional Mix	This information can be found in the part: Findings
The professional identifies the most important (internal and external) trends and developments and clarifies their influence on the issue.		This information can be found in part: Trends and Developments & PEST Analysis
The professional collects knowledge in a responsible way to support a decision and valuates this knowledge.	The knowledge collected from the research is used for the analysis of the segmentation, targeting and the creation of the table in the part Posts in details of the Social Media Marketing Plan.	This information can be found in part: Knowledge Collection
The professional justifies how the wishes of the stakeholders have been taken into account in the final product.		This information can be found in part: Stakeholders
The professional substantiates the extent to which the made choices are socially responsible (e.g. with regard to ethical, intercultural and sustainability aspects).	This information can be found in the part: Posts in Details	This information can be found in the part: Data Management
The professional demonstrates the financial feasibility of the professional product.		This information can be found in part: Finance

1.1 Management problem

The management problem of Holiday Inn is low demand of leisure guests and how to attract more through online channels. Since the hotel opened in 2016 the target group is small business, leisure and families. The target group got deviated and a higher percentage of business guests was in result. Plovdiv is a big business centre and the hotel is conveniently situated near the business/trade zone and the international fair centre. After opening and even before, the hotel was proclaimed for the best new business hotel and articles the potential leisure readers appeared stating that Holiday Inn Plovdiv is known as a business hotel. The lower interest in leisure tourists is a result of all these issues. The marketing department of IHG and Holiday Inn is responsible for distinguishing the target group and developing strategies for attracting and retaining guests. The owner of the company pays a monthly franchise fee for marketing and although the huge effort of many teams the current result is higher business, transient, sport, cultural event, meeting and conference guests, but not a high demand of leisure guest. The current means of communication they use to attract more leisure guests are the GDS as Travel Agencies (TA), Online travel agencies (OTA) - Booking.com, Expedia, etc., also Facebook, Instagram and their website – ihg.com / holidayinn.com

Moreover, they also use the percentage discount on their F&B outlets for guests staying in the hotel. The guests can use the gym free of charge. Children stay for free in their parent's room and are entitled to the program "Kids eat for free" apply for kids up to 13 years old

These are standard practices which IHG implements in their hotels to attract families. Holiday Inn Plovdiv uses all IHG practices to customize a target group but still comparatively leisure demand is lower than business.

Therefore, the core problem lies in the marketing department. In the fast-changing hospitality world, every step of the right market position is crucial. That is why Holiday Inn has to be up to date with the current trends and developments in the industry. This way they will improve the current situation and improve on gain of leisure guests. According to (J.D, 2019) business trend awareness is a skill which enables a business to keep in track with the fast-developing world and adjust to it. Lacking this skill, a business risks of losing its market share and values.

1.2 Management question

Based on these facts, the client's management question is*: How can Holiday Inn Hotel increase the percentage of leisure guests through online platforms and GDS channels and influence the booking decision.*

To make the management question clearer the term GDS will be explained in detail. GDS stands for Global Distribution System. It is an enormous computer network as well as reservation tool which is used by hotels to distribute their inventory and rates to travel agents which allows them to make bookings. The property's information like rates and inventory are loaded into both the GDS and ODD (Online Distribution Database). (Martinez, 2008).

Online platforms will be discussed further in the report but a brief explanation of the term is given below: According to (OECD, 2019) online platforms is used to describe a range of services available on the internet including marketplaces, search engines, social media, creative content outlets, app stores, communication services, payment systems, services comprising the "collaborative" or "gig" economy, and many more. (OECD, 2019). Another definition by (European Commission , 2019) says that online platforms are used every day- for social networking, for buying goods, or services online. Moreover, they are used for searching for information and accessing content over the internet. Online platforms intermediate information and communication flow on the internet. They are the key enablers for digital trade and marketing across the globe. Online platforms are key drivers for innovation in the digital worlds and their success is closely tied to the success of the businesses that use platforms to reach their customers. (European Commission , 2019).

PEST Analysis Bulgaria

- **Political Factors:**

Over the past three decades, Bulgaria has undergone a significant transformation. The country has changed from a highly centralized, planned economy to an open, market- based, upper-middle-income country securely positioned in the European Union (EU). During the initial transition, Bulgaria went through a decade of slow economic restructuring and growth, it had high indebtedness and a low of savings.

When the advancement of structural reforms which started in the late 1990s, and the introduction of the currency board, the expectations of EU accession unleashed a decade of great economic growth and improved living standards significantly. In fact, the global economic crisis of 2008 and a period of political instability in 2013-2014 revoke a few of those contributions.

In this current period, the ongoing coronavirus pandemic is forecast to pull down the economy into a recession in 2020. The poverty is expected to increase, job losses and increasing vulnerabilities associated with the crisis will have a big impact on the society. (The World Bank, 2020)

Besides the fact that the global pandemic of coronavirus is threatening the economy and politics of Bulgaria, an article by (TUI Group , 2017) focuses on the development of Bulgarian tourism during the past decade. The government switched the investment focus from budget holiday to higher hotel categories and diversification of the tourism market. At the moment Bulgaria is the perfect destination for all kinds of holidays, like a beach holiday on the Black Sea coast to hiking in the national parks. The winter sports were also developed during the recent years. The European Union also contributed by naming Plovdiv with its ancient landmarks as European City of Culture for 2019. (TUI Group , 2017)

- **Economic Factors:**

During the transition period in the 1990s, the Bulgarian economy has been deindustrialized. Compared with other sectors like the heavy and light industry, mining and agriculture, the services are the min motive power of the economic growth during the past years, they are contributing to 65,5% of the gross value added. (National Statistical Institute, 2013). One of the greatest factors of this growth is tourism which is both large and a fast-growing sector, being amongst the drivers of the Bulgarian economic development. During the past five years, tourism contributed significantly with 3.8% GDP and 3.5% of employment. Keeping in mind the indirect and induced effects the contribution from tourism grows respectively to 13.9% of GDP and 12.8% or employment on the average. According to the database of the World Travel and Tourism Council, the contribution from tourism in Bulgaria is slightly above the average for EU. (Stoilova, 2015)

- **Social:**

The image of the society is also among some of the factors which are influencing the usage of various forms of electronic devices, social media and other online platforms for booking. These innovations make the targeting of different social groups easier and more efficient. This trend is seen mostly among young people and adolescents which are the main users of these innovations. (Assistant, 2019)

Besides this religion, historical issues and cross-cultural communications do not affect the use of electronic devices, social media and other online platforms. (Basscom, Bulgarian national PESTLE and SWOT analysis. , 2011)

Other than how the technology is perceived in society; demographics are another aspect which could be affecting the usage of social media and innovations. The population of Bulgaria is constantly decreasing, it is mainly concentrated in the big cities and the average age is increasing by - 30% of the population is over 65 years old and is dominated by women (National Statistical Institute, 2015)

The total population of Bulgaria is 6,931,645 million (United Nations, 2019). And 3.71million of them are using social media and online platforms as a source of information about inspiration, news, shopping, travel and leisure services. (Basscom, 2011). According to (Kuzmanova, 2020) the COVID-19 pandemic has been a trendsetter for Bulgarian tourism. The software that is mainly used in the Bulgarian tourism sector includes property management software, mobile apps, web-based catalogues and customer relationship management platforms. The platforms mostly used are Booking.com which prevails and TripAdvisor. (Kuzmanova, 2020)

The software technology that is traditionally used in the Bulgarian tourism sector includes property management software, mobile apps, web-based catalogues, and customer relationship management platforms. In terms of platforms, foreign providers such as Booking.com prevail. Only a small number of local providers have managed to establish platforms such as Clock (booking engine) and Planet Travel Center (online booking and ticketing).

Trends and Developments:

The second step of the environmental analysis is the trends and developments within the field. In the background of the management question, there are a few internal and external trends and developments. Holiday Inn can take into account these trends and benefit from them. There are a couple of trends which are taken into consideration when designing the professional product- Social media marketing plan. To analyze the trends and developments in the field a DESTEP model is used.

Demographic:

- **Millennial Generation:**
  The millennial generation is the largest in history. Reaching them means understanding what products and services fall in their interests. Marketing should be done on their terms through their channels. The millennials are spending time online twice as much as any other generation nowadays. This means they have the biggest buyer power. (Lang, 2020)
  According to (Perrin, 2015) social media is the mass media for the millennial generation. Almost 90% of all 18-29-year old's use at least one form of social media and spend up to 6.19 hours per week on it. (Casey, 2017). Half of these 6.19 hours per week, the millennial generation spends on online shopping and brand research (Loeb, 2020). Moreover, they tend to be impacted by influencers who they follow on social media. (Loeb, 2020). The millennials would prefer spending on travel and hotels rather than owning art or valuable antiques. (Loeb, 2020)

- **Generation Z:**
  The generation Z includes anyone born after 1995 until 2010. Characterized as a distracted, unserious and disrespecting business that isn't online. This generation creates pressure around digital marketeers with every change of trend along with marketing tools. Gen Z matters to businesses because in the future is expected to account around 40% of all customers. Understanding Gen Z needs and wants will bring value and profitability to a business. (Campaign Monitor, 2019). According to (Francis & Hoefel, 2018) the members of "Gen- Z" are true digital natives, from early age they have been exposed to the internet and technology making them future buying power. Adopting social media marketing strategies up to their interests will increase the sales says (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Another important aspect of Gen-Z is that they do not know the world before the internet and technology. They were born in a fully digital era which influences each business significantly (Wood, 2013). Gen- Z is also much less concerned about being monitored by large companies to deliver more customized products, while other generation found this disturbing and threatening (Wood, 2013). Generation Z usage of Facebook for instance is 77%, compared to the 68% usage by 35-to-54-year old's and 52% of the 55-plus age group. Which means they must be targeted via social media for best reach. Instagram is also a big part of Gen Z social media usage. The daily usage by the 18-34-year-old is 72%, 41% by the 35-54-year-old and only 9% by the 55-plus age group. (Wood, 2013)

Economic:

- **COVID- 19 Pandemic**
Considering that the pandemic of Covid-19 is fast- evolving and very unexpectable therefore the impact on the tourism industry cannot be defined concretely. It is known that international tourists arrivals could decline by 20% to 30% in 2020. The World Travel And Tourism Council estimated that covid-19 could cut 50milion jobs worldwide in the travel and tourism industry. When the outbreak is over the travel and tourism industry will need 10months up to a year to start recovering. (Sohail, 2020). In a report by (Gursoy & Chi, 2020) it is stated that a large number of individuals (over 50%) are not willing to dine in at a restaurant immediately. The same goes for staying at hotels. Most customers (over 50%) are not willing to travel to a destination and stay at a hotel any time soon. This will impose great pressure over the hospitality industry. These percentages suggest that customers, in general, do not feel comfortable to dine in an indoor/outdoor restaurant, travel to a destination or stay at a hotel. Since the breakeven point in hospitality is comparably high due to high operating costs, the survival of many hospitality businesses heavily depends on increasing the demand for their services and products. (Gursoy & Chi, 2020)

Social:

- **Personalization Trend:**
Almost across all industries, the trend for personalization is a major trend. The hospitality industry is not far behind and guests want to get as personalized services as possible. In a reference to this, Holiday Inn should focus on improving its targeting. Not having the right target group can lead to a lack of good personalization. (Boudet, 2019). According to (Muralidharan, 2019) developing relationships with your audience on social media can be very profitable. With developing relationships with the target audience, the opportunity of personalizing services will increase much more rather than not maintaining good and strong connections. Personalized contents give an advantage of the service offered and it helps stand out (Muralidharan, 2019).

Technological:

- **Integrated marketing**
Nowadays technology is highly involved in any aspect of life. Same goes for the business and its marketing. Social media and websites are one of the main marketing tools used to promote a product or service. However, social media is not the only channel to be used. Market data analysis is as important as social media marketing. Without data, integrated marketing is impossible. (St. Bonaventure University Online, 2019). According to (Allen, 2020) integrated marketing is a strategic approach to integrating communications and interactive experiences which are targeting defined audiences and individuals. They coordinate all aspects of marketing of a brand and include paid media (online and offline marketing); earned media (i.e., online influencer reach) and owned media (social media, own website, direct messaging through email and mobile) (Allen, 2020).

Ecological:

- **Sustainable marketing**
Sustainable marketing is the promotion of environmental and socially responsible products, services, practices and brand values. Holiday Inn needs to integrate sustainable marketing practices in their services. This way the Millennial Generation and Generation Z will be tempted to choose this hotel over another which is not as sustainable (Story, 2019). According to (Barnes, 2020) environmental pollution is one of the biggest threats which humanity is experiencing nowadays. Sustainable marketing is one of the most important aspects of marketing today. Third of the customers now, prefer buying good or using services which are labelled biodegradable, eco-friendly or organic. Keeping that in mind would bring a lot of positivity to a marketing campaign and trust in consumers. (Barnes, 2020)

- **GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)**
  The GDPR is designed to ensure that there will be more transparency between companies who want to collect and control the date of their clients and the people whose personal information has been collected. This is connected to the management problem since defining a clear target group for Holiday Inn means creating a social media marketing plan which complies with GDPR (HubSpot , 2019). Besides the importance of GDPR, Privacy Policy agreement holds central importance. According to (P, 2020) today's business is largely dependent on data to provide services and products to their customers. Therefore, keeping data safe is of high importance. Maintenance of servers and social media account can reduce the change of data leakage and imposing a fine on a business. (Swinhoe, 2020)

The above-mentioned PEST analysis and Trends and Developments were considered while creating the social media marketing plan. The solutions given were based on the trends within social media and the different generation's behaviour towards these trends. Since Holiday Inn is highly competitive within the hospitality industry they need to know how these trends and developments affect their environment.

II. Solution strategies

In this part, the reason behind all the choices made for creating the social media marketing plan is going to be discussed in detail.

Why the professional product is relevant to solving the client's problem and how it fits in with the trends and developments described?

The professional product is a social media marketing plan. To create efficient, feasible and realistic product extensive research was conducted. This includes literature research where academic sources, articles and books have been analysed. All recommendations and choices made were substantiated by the literature. Besides, the literature research surveys and expert interviews were carried out. Based on the surveys the target group of Holiday Inn was examined, and the expert interviews provided with information on different topics such as the target group, current social media marketing practices, opportunities and weaknesses. The product is relevant to solving the client's problem because it is looking at different angles of the management issue. The external environment is being investigated as well as all relevant trends and developments. The social media marketing plan is based on the research and in line with the client's mission and vision. The marketing strategy is created based on the characteristics of the target group, their wants and needs.

After conducting extensive literature research on different social media channels, it was made clear that Facebook and Instagram are the most appropriate channels through which a hotel can increase its leisure guest's percentage. The Millennial and Z generations are most active on Instagram and Facebook, and they are also holding the biggest part of the target group for Holiday Inn.

The suggested posts content is derived from different social media-based articles and books which are entirely looking into the hospitality industry. The posts content is considered most effective since a couple of researches have been conducted and the increase of followers and leisure guests significantly increased. The engagement rate of the social media channel and the click-through rate is also proven to be increased.

The personalization trend has been taken into account, therefore, the posts content, frequency of posting and time of day are entirely based on the survey which aimed of gathering information about the target group of Holiday Inn and their social media behaviour.

Besides the contents of the Social Media Marketing plan the chosen structure will be explained. Several articles and books were analysed and used as guidance for creating the contents of the plan. These include Scherer (2020) who points out why having a clear social media plan is important for reaching business goals. Moreover, Patel (2020), argues on the most important parts which Social Media

Marketing Plan should contain and where the focus has to be bigger. He adds that knowing the business objectives is the first most important step. According to a report from Gálik (2016), Social Media Marketing plan should have easy to read and understand structure as well as detailed and clear explanations per chapter which explain what will be discussed so the reader never loses track of the structure.

For evaluating the choices made during the creation of the project Pros and Cons table has been created below. Only the most important choices made are being selected and evaluated:

Choices	Pros	Cons
Segmentation - Existing guests - Potential guests	Extensive analysis is done to find more information about the target group of Holiday Inn which helps to develop the social media plan.	The target group is divided into two which might be hard to track especially on social media. Having it as one target group is more feasible.
Targeting	Some recommendation on how to target the audience on social media is given. Clearer representation of the target group is made.	This part could have been more elaborated including more specific choices when targeting on social media.
Social Media Marketing Objectives	A list with the social media objectives is created, this way the marketing team of Holiday Inn and use the objectives to track the results.	Occupancy objectives are too limited.
Integrated Promotional Mix - Platforms - Posts in details	Gives the clear reason why the chosen social media channels have to be used. Posts recommendations are given supported by research.	Posts recommendations could be more and better supported by research.

2.1 Use of knowledge

This chapter consists of the knowledge gathered during the development of the social media marketing plan for Holiday Inn. Below will be described which knowledge was needed, how the knowledge was collected and all the findings and how this information was used in the project.

2.2 Required knowledge

The part required knowledge was already discussed in the Plan of Approach, which serves as the start of the project. Several sub-questions have been determined then. Among the process of developing the project, some sub-question has slightly changed or completely dropped out.

Management Question:

How can Holiday Inn Hotel increase the percentage of leisure guests through online platforms and GDS channels and influence the booking decision.

Sub- Questions:

1. **What are the trends and developments supporting the management problem of Holiday Inn?**
2. How do the trends and developments affect the guests of Holiday Inn?
3. How do the trends and developments affect the stakeholders of Holiday Inn?
4. **What are the characteristics of social media marketing?**
5. How does social media marketing strategy help the client?
6. **What are the trends in social media channels?**
7. How can marketing tools support the client?
8. Which marketing tools help the client solve its management problem?
9. **Which is the target group of Holiday Inn hotel, Plovdiv?**

10. What are the target group interests?
11. How old are the persons part of the target group?
12. What nationalities are part of the target group?
13. What is the income of the target group?
14. How does the target group get information?
15. Which channels does the target group use to look for accommodation?
16. **What is online promotion?**
17. How can a promotion solve the client's management problem?
18. Which promotion methods will help the client?
19. Which are the most effective promotion methods
20. **Stakeholders**
21. Who are the current stakeholders of the company?
22. Who are the internal stakeholders?
23. Who are the external stakeholders?
24. How can the stakeholders be involved in the social media marketing plan?

2.3 Knowledge collection

In order to answer the client's management question and the sub-questions formulated, knowledge had to be collected. In this part can be found how the knowledge was collected and the used data collection methods.

2.3.1 Research Strategy

For the purposes of the research, both primary and secondary research methods will be used. During the whole process, qualitative and quantitative research will be used.

The reason why qualitative research will be done is that the reasons and the causes of the management problem has to be defined and deeper insights have to be created. Therefore, interviews with experts will be carried out. Other way to gain insights about the problem is to analyze statistics. This will be relevant for the management problem because the focus will lay on where, when, what, how long and how often a problem appears. Relevant for this management problem is to analyze the target group via surveys. Surveys are a type of quantitative research. The surveys will be distributed via the Facebook page of the client Holiday Inn.

Another research strategy which will be used is an analytical research strategy. This strategy will be used to help answering the sub-questions formulated. For that reason, desk research will be executed. In the literature, research sources will be used to provide information rather than only solutions since the end products have to be innovative and up to the standards of the client. (Verhoeven N. 2015)

2.3.2 Data Collection Plan

For the purpose of this research, a couple of sub-questions are created to help solve the client's management problem. In order to give a clear answer to them, a literature study will be carried out. The reason for carrying out this literature research is to find theoretical support for the research project. During the literature study, academical sources, articles and books will be analyzed in order to find suitable and useful answers to the sub-questions. Company documents such as policy and franchise regulations will be used as well as marketing and reception databases, these documents will be used for finding more information about the target group of Holiday Inn. Besides the literature review, qualitative research will be executed by several interviews with experts. These experts are the General manager of Holiday Inn, the Reception Manager and the Marketing and sales manager. The goal of conducting these interviews is to gain information about the target group of Holiday Inn and moreover to gather information about different marketing strategies which will be useful for the project. The interviews will be in form of a Skype conversation with each of the participants. The type of interview will be an open semi-structured interview with open questions. There will be a topic list in order to keep the interview structured. The interviews will take approximately 30-40 minutes. Each interview will be recorded and for the purpose, a laptop and a mobile recorded will be used. A topic list covering all the

important topics which have to be discussed will guide the interviewer through the duration of the interview.

2.3.3 Measurement instruments

The research instruments used are libraries, the internet (Google Scholar, Google).

Besides that, surveys and interviews will be conducted in order to gain insightful information about the target group of Holiday Inn and their wants and needs. According to (Yaya, 2014) survey is the most common way to gather insightful and truthful information from respondents. The author also states that a survey has many advantages such as the anonymity of the respondents is guaranteed and it facilitates the collection of large amounts of data in a relatively short time.

Interviews are a measurement instrument where a researcher solicits information from respondents through verbal interaction. Usually, the researcher prepares a list of questions before the interview. (Yaya, 2014)

2.3.4 Surveys

Population and Sample

Population:

The population of the research is Leisure Guests, these are all the people which will be used to make statements about in the research. From this generalized term, a sample will be drawn in order for the research to be valid and reliable.

According to (Verhoeven N. , 2015) there are several ways to draw random samples. The first thing which has to be done by the researcher is to find out if there is already an existing database which contains the population that is relevant for the research.

For this research, Simple random sampling will be used in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected according to (Verhoeven N. , 2015) and (Brotherton, 2015)

Sample 1: Existing Guests of Holiday Inn

The sample "Existing Guests of Holiday Inn' represents a subset of the whole population.

The survey will be posted on the Facebook page of Holiday Inn which forms the database of the existing guests of Holiday Inn. Due to restrictions from the franchisor, the survey cannot be sent directly to the database of Holiday Inn. Holiday Inn cannot contact the guests in any kind of way (through email or phone). This is the reason why the Facebook page is the only option to conduct the survey.

The Facebook page of Holiday Inn consists of 1,107 likes and 1, 124 followers (Facebook)

The survey will be conducted in order to gain information about the existing guests of Holiday Inn and who they are as travellers. They can provide with information about their demographics, lifestyle, wishes and needs.

The way that people will be made to fill in the survey is explaining to them that in this way they will contribute to improving the services of Holiday Inn.

These outcomes will contribute significantly to the social media marketing plan. This way the social media marketing plan will be personalized and insight will be gained for the usage of social media channels and strategies.

The second sample will represent the entire population as a whole. The population consists of all the customers that are interested in travelling to Plovdiv for different kind of purposes such as leisure or business travels.

This group of potential Holiday Inn guests are all the people interested in the historical city of Plovdiv and wishing to stay in a hotel instead of Airbnb or apartment rental. This group of people will start filling in the survey only if they are really wishing to visit Plovdiv and are interested in staying in a hotel. Otherwise, the survey will end at the very beginning. The respondents will answer various questions such as their demographics, their interests in a city trip, and social media channels which they mostly use in order to search for holiday destinations etc.

The choice to conduct a survey among potential guests of Holiday Inn is to gain insight into what kind of social media channels leisure guests use to book a hotel or to find more information about a destination.

The respondents which are aimed to be targeted are people between 20-40 years old mainly people interested in staying at hotels with 3 stars and above. In order to reach the respondents, social media channels will be used. This includes Facebook and Instagram. Besides social media channels, communication channels like WhatsApp and Viber will be used for the distribution of the survey.

Sampling types, timescale and location

The data collection will happen at the same point in time. This means that the participants will be interviewed at a single point of time and for this purpose **cross-sectional** studies will be used. The interviewees will be interviewed only once and the data from the survey participants will be also gathered only once. (Verhoeven N. , 2015)

Moreover, the research used will be **field research** instead of laboratory research. This research method is relevant for the purpose of the research and for the participants. They will be in their own environment to gather as honest and relevant information as possible. The interviews will take place via Skype due to the current epidemiological situation worldwide. (Verhoeven N. , 2015)

Additionally, the research will be fixed research. This means that the time and location are already set up before the interviews take place. An invitation will be sent to the interviewee's email addresses pointing time and location (Skype).

The participants of the survey will have two weeks to fill in their answers. The location is up to where they are located at the time period.

The first type of Survey will be posted on the Facebook page of Holiday Inn while the second type of survey will be posted in Facebook besides that WhatsApp, Viber and Email will be used for distributing it.

Hereby, the links of the two conducted surveys can be found.

1. Social Media Behaviour Existing Holiday Inn Guests:
   https://saxion.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bdbGVP98CjWp93v
2. Potential Guests Holiday Inn, Plovdiv:
   https://saxion.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d4JUrtpmekUDENL

In this part, the findings of the knowledge collection will be presented. Answers to the formulated sub-questions will be given as well as the management question of the client. The findings will be presented through the gathered knowledge from literature, expert interviews, surveys and company documents.

Management Question:

How can Holiday Inn Hotel increase the percentage of leisure guests through online platforms and GDS channels and influence the booking decision.

- Holiday inn can increase the percentage of leisure guests through social media marketing. After extensive research was conducted in order to create a feasible and relevant social media marketing plan, it can be concluded that the most efficient way for Holiday Inn is to engage its target group through the social media channels Facebook and Instagram. This can happen by regularly posting on both platforms, target its audience and engage with them through different kinds of posts. These posts should contain fresh topics, in line with the target group's interests. Follow the latest trends and developments and implement them in its social media channels. Moreover, paid promotion reaching a bigger audience should be done regularly.

Sub- Questions:

1. **What are the trends and developments supporting the management problem of Holiday Inn?**

After looking into relevant literature, the trends and developments supporting the management problem of Holiday inn can be found in part: 1.3 Trends and Developments and PEST Analysis

2. **How do the trends and developments affect the guests of Holiday Inn?**

The trends and developments affect the interests, wants and needs of Holiday Inn. They are specifically affecting their choices in accommodation and their booking decision. Therefore, Holiday Inn has to be aware of the newest trends and developments and integrate them as much as possible in their social media strategy.

3. **How do the trends and developments affect the stakeholders of Holiday Inn?**

The trends and developments affect both the internal and external stakeholders of Holiday Inn. Since they cause a social impact in almost every aspect of the hospitality industry. Each change which the business makes affects its stakeholders, therefore, Holiday Inn has to keep a close watch of its stakeholders especially the ones which can cause harm.

4. **What are the characteristics of social media marketing?**

Based on the conducted literature review the characteristics of social media marketing are including finding more information about the target group, choosing the right social media channels, creating a feasible and clear strategy, setting business objectives and making a clear overview of the posting frequency and what time of the day is most suitable for posting. Moreover, tracking the results and calculating the needed budget is essential for the social media marketing plan.

5. **How does social media marketing strategy help the client?**

The social media marketing plan helps the client by representing a clear strategy which will support the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn in making decisions connected with their social media channels. Social media is the most used way of promoting business, engaging with its target group and creating a brand image. Most of the leisure guests nowadays are using social media for accommodation research and it has a strong influence on their booking decision.

6. **What are the trends in social media channels?**

Trends in social media channels are expressed in frequent posting and focusing on quality content. Content should bring value and/ or interesting facts and knowledge. Should be attractive in looks and the selection of hashtags should be careful.

7. **How can marketing tools support the client?**

The marketing tools which support the client and help him to solve the management issue are social media channels, there the target group can be reached and engaged.

8. **Which marketing tools help the client solve its management problem?**

The marketing tools which will help the client solve its management problem are: social media channels: Facebook and Instagram

9. **Which is the target group of Holiday Inn hotel, Plovdiv?**

The target group of Holiday Inn is the Contemporary Traveler

10. **What are the target group interests?**

Their interests are genuine and true relationships with each other, good and quality service, casual atmosphere. They are also characterized as creating value through memories and crave enjoyable moments in both business and leisure.

11. **How old are the persons part of the target group?**

The people part of the target group of Holiday Inn are between 25- 35 years old

12. **What nationalities are part of the target group?**

Based on the first survey conducted the nationalities of the target group are:

- Bulgarian
- Romanian
- Dutch
- German
- Austrian
- Italian

13. **What is the income of the target group?**

The income of the target group is categorized as €0-€15 000 (0-30 000 BGN)
The exchange rate for Bulgarian Lev is 1.95 which is fixed rate due to European Union agreement. Therefore €15 000 is equal to 30 000 BGN

14. **How does the target group get information?**

Based on the survey results the target group gets information through Facebook and Instagram; some prefer YouTube as well.

15. **Which channels does the target group use to look for accommodation?**

The target group prefers using Facebook and Instagram for accommodation research.

16. **What is online promotion?**

Online promotion involves the use of the internet to promote a business. The end goal of online promotion is to make people aware of a brand of product through the internet.

17. **How can a promotion solve the client's management problem?**

Online promotion can solve the client's management problem by getting closer to the target group and engaging them through social media channels. This way the target group's booking decision of a hotel

can be influenced. Holiday Inn can showcase its facilities, location, room and Food and Beverage outlets and representation of its values and this way attract the right audience.

18. Which promotion methods will help the client?

The promotional methods are already extensively discussed in part: Promotional Mix. Promoting a post on social media at least 2 times per week can ensure the visibility of the brand and reach a bigger audience.

19. Which are the most effective promotion methods

The most effective promotion methods are promoting a post while there is a running promotion at the hotel. This can be done as well before holidays.

20. Stakeholders
21. Who are the current stakeholders of the company?

Elaborate information about the current internal and external stakeholder can be found in part: Stakeholders of this Substantiation report.

The complete analysis of the data and literature can be found in the appendices of the Substantiation report:

Appendix I: **-** Literature Research
Appendix II: - Axial Coding Table
Appendix III: - Survey Data- Univariate Analysis
Appendix IV: - Tree Diagrams Surveys

In this part, it will be explained how the knowledge results have helped in developing the Social Media Marketing Plan. By knowledge results it is meant: all the data from the surveys conducted, the expert interview's insights and the literature review collected knowledge. The separate part of the plan will be taken out and backed up by the research findings.

Segmentation and Targeting:

These two parts of the social media marketing plan are based on the conducted interviews with experts the two surveys, company documents and literature research. The part segmentation includes extensive representation of the target group of Holiday Inn, the results from both surveys have been used together with insights from the interview with Gergana Georgieva, who is the General Manager of Holiday Inn and the Marketing Manager Lora Koritareva. Moreover, company documents were used, they include Holiday Inn playbook which is used for guidance when posting on social media. The part Targeting has been created with the help of the two surveys, expert interviews and literature research. Most of the information was gained from literature focusing on social media targeting and what are the steps which have to be taken.

Branding and Identity

This part of the Social Media Marketing plan is entirely based on company documents. These documents are found on the website of Intercontinental Hotel Group or obtained through the General Manager of Holiday Inn. This part aims to give more information about the brand Holiday Inn, what is the mission and vision and their core characteristics. Moreover, it gives information about the franchisor IHG and their business model.

Social Media Marketing Objectives

The social media marketing objectives are set based on the SMART model for creating objectives. Literature has been reviewed in order to find out which objectives are feasible and smart and how should they be formulated.

Current Situation

For developing the part current situation, literature and company documents have been used. This part discusses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Holiday Inn based on the SWOT model. Besides the mentioned documents, insights from the expert interviews have been used as well.

Social Media Marketing Strategy

For this part of the plan, mainly literature was used and analysed. The chosen RACE model is clear and easy to follow, from literature was found that many companies use it for creating a social media strategy.

Integrated Promotional Mix

This part of the social media marketing plan consists of two parts: platforms and posts in details. There the best posts suggestions are presented, together with the most used hashtags on social media now. Moreover, the frequency of posting and when posts should be made is shown. For this purpose, literature has been used together with the data gained from the two surveys. Some insights from the expert interviews have been used as well.

Timescale and Resources, Evaluation and Control

This part of the social media marketing plan is the most important since there is explained how the results can be tracked, a Gantt chart for scheduling a post is done to support the marketing team of Holiday Inn. For these parts mainly literature was used together with some company documents. The budgeting has been created together with the General Manager of Holiday Inn.

3.1 Discussion

This part of the substantiation will look into the quality of the knowledge which was gathered. The quality of the results will be discussed through the concepts of "validity" and "reliability". Moreover, the usefulness of the collected knowledge will be discussed, what else could have been found out and what information turned out to be less useful than expected.

Validity- Expert Interviews

According to Verhoeven (2015) validity is discussed as making systematic errors, when receiving wrong answers from the participants of a research, by purpose, and by different reasons. For making the research internally valid, the participants have been selected based on previously build up criteria. This way the opinion of one participant can be count for the group that he/she belongs to. Before conducting the interviews, the interview guides with question were distributed to the respondents so that they already knew what to expect and prepare what to answer. However, during the interviews, each respondent gave a clear and unadulterated answer.

External validity discusses the sample choice, for the purpose of the expert interview criteria have been created and based on it the respondents have been chosen. Moreover, a detailed explanation of the respondents can be found in Appendix Book: Part 1.1 Choice of Interviewees

The construct validity is about the used measurement instruments. To select the most suitable measurement instruments, core concepts were extracted from the management question, they were defined through literature and sub-questions were formulated for getting a better understanding of the research topic.

Validity- Surveys

The sample of the survey is random and the location of the respondents is chosen by them. The desired number of respondents for the first survey- Social Media Behaviour Existing Holiday Inn Guests is 150, after conducting the survey the response count is 54 responses. This influences the validity since almost 100 responses have not been collected during the 2 weeks' time given. This error could have possibly happened due to the reason that the Facebook page of Holiday Inn is targeting only Bulgarian citizens, and it is not distributed correctly to the whole target group of Holiday Inn. Guests who have already been guests at the hotel are most probably not following the page.

The second survey (Potential Guests of Holiday Inn, Plovdiv) sample is random and the location of the respondents is chosen by them. The desired number of respondents is 150 again as the first survey, and the actual number of respondents is 51. This influences the validity since almost 100 responses have not been collected during the 2 weeks' time given. This error could have possibly occurred due to the limited distribution of the survey.

Reliability

The results should be consistent if the same research methods are used as described above. The results of the expert interviews and surveys should as well remain the same. The expert interviews happed through the online platform Skype. The first survey was distributed via the Facebook page of Holiday Inn, the second survey was distributed via LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Viber, Email and Instagram.

Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the interviews the questions were based on tree diagrams which were supported by literature research. The choice of interviewees is consistent because they have been selected based on a criterion which was previously developed. The participants from the surveys were among the same populations but representatives of different cultures and backgrounds

Usefulness of Data Collection

During the data collection, a lot of information was gathered, some of this information turned out not to be that useful for constructing the Social Media Marketing plan but useful for the client. A couple of examples are given below:

Survey Questions:

- **Channels used for business travel:** the respondents had to point which Online Travel Agents such as booking.com; expedia.com etc. they are mostly using when booking their business trips. This information is useful for the client but not contributing to the construction of the Social Media Marketing plan.
- **Channels used for leisure travel:** the respondents had to point out which Online Travel Agent they mostly use for booking their leisure trip. Same as the question above this was not useful for the plan.
- **Follow of influencers:** the respondents had to point out if they follow influencers. This information does not really support the marketing plan as it intended to.

Data Management Plan

Since for the purpose of this research data has to be gathered from people. It is essential that this data is confidential and it will be used only for the purpose of this research. The data is anonymous and it won't be shared in any kind of way besides for the research. The survey won't ask the respondents for their names or personal information besides their gender and age. There are two types of surveys, one is targeted to already existing guests of Holiday Inn and the second survey is targeted to potential guests of the hotel. The information obtained from them is kept safe and will be used only for the purpose of the research. The gathered data will be a foundation of the social media marketing plan for Holiday Inn hotel.

The interviews will be confidential as well. The audio recording won't be used for other purposes besides the research. The interviewees will be informed on the procedure before the interview takes place, so they can be fully prepared with their answers and avoid confusion and biases.

3.1 Stakeholders

In the table below you can find all the stakeholders and their roles, responsibilities and interests. This table did not change since the initial phase of this project- The Plan of Approach. Under this table, a method from change management will be described for overcoming resistance from stakeholders.

Area	Stakeholder	Roles	Responsibilities	Interests
Internal Stakeholders	General Manager	Her role in the project is to provide with necessary information about the realization of the project and also assess the project. The whole process of creating the marketing communication plan will be assessed and reviewed by her.	She is responsible for financing the project and discussing legal matters with the franchisor as well as the owner of Holiday Inn. She is also responsible to keep her staff members informed about	Increasing leisure guest's percentage and improving the occupancy rate. Generating more revenue

				the status of the project	
	Sales and Marketing Manager	The role of the sales and marketing manager is to execute the project and delegate tasks to her marketing team.	Responsible for the marketing team and all the marketing processes happening at Holiday Inn.	The interests of the Marketing manager are to define a clear target group for the hotel and focus on improving the percentage of leisure guests. To create suitable marketing campaigns.	
	Reception/Reservation Manager	The reception/Reservation manager of Holiday Inn has the role to help with the data collection for the project. She will assist with the surveys and inform her staff about the implementation of new processes.	Responsible for the reservations and the front office. Her tasks are to manage her reception team and all the hotel's reservations.	The interests of the FO/Reservation manager are to improve the percentage of leisure guests' reservations and to provide them with useful information about the city.	
	Employees	To execute the marketing communication plan.	To perform all the needed activities in order to execute the project.	To help the hotel improve its performance.	
External Stakeholders	Media	The media will distribute new information about the hotel.	Distributing news to the audience.	Keeping the audience up to date.	
	Customers	Booking stay at Holiday Inn	They are the target group of the hotel	To receive the desired services.	
	OTA's	Visitor can choose, book and pay for a stay from a wide range of hotels, B & Bs and this in different destinations and cities. The role of the OTA is to distribute the hotel services to the right target group.	Distribute the hotel services to the right target group.	To create a good image of the hotel and lead to more reservations.	

Overcoming Stakeholder Resistance

According to a report by (Piney, 2009, pp. 1–6) often when there is a change management a dip between the management and the stakeholders is experienced. This dip is caused initially by people's unconscious reaction to the idea of change. This can happen in the beginning or along the way of a project which they first supported strongly. People also tend to stand in a fighter or denial position when the project is experiencing difficulties and when they realise the full impact of the effort required.

The following stages are usually how the process of change management goes: denial; anger; pessimism; despair; testing; acceptance; informed optimism. The first step of addressing the situation, minimizing the dip and moving through it is to designate "change agents". Each agent provides the support, information and understanding which is required to help the different stakeholders. These are simple methods which Holiday Inn can implement in case of any resistance from the various stakeholders.

Possible resistance could come from the stakeholders since the social media marketing plan is introducing a change to Holiday Inn and its social media channels. It is possible that the different stakeholders resist to believe the social media plan is suitable for the hotel or effective.

How Holiday Inn can overcome possible resistance is through creating a plan of action. It can be seen from the table above that most stakeholders have interests and views that match. In order to keep good track of the implementation of the professional product and track results the PDCA cycle (plan-do-check-act) can be used. This is a simple model and it will give the stakeholders clarity on the new processes.

Broader Impact:

- **Stakeholders**: when developing the professional product, the different stakeholders were taken into account. When looking at the past situation of Holiday Inn, most of their guests were booking the hotel for business purposes instead of leisure. This was oobserved by the general manager of Holiday Inn and the management question for this project was determined. This professional product was developed in order to give advice on usage of social media with the goal attracting more leisure guests for Holiday Inn. If the social media marketing plan brings more social media engagement this will bring more value to the channels and they will reach broader audience for Holiday Inn. Moreover, the professional product will positively impact the image of the hotel and the city of Plovdiv. The posts suggestions include showing when there are local events organized in the city such as concerts, art exhibitions and sport events. Also, it will help leisure guests with their booking decision when booking a hotel for their holiday.
- **Social**: the professional product has a broad social impact because it helps engaging with the target group of Holiday Inn and maintain connection with them throughout the whole year. It is an innovative substitution for communication between the hotel and its guests.

- **Ethical considerations:** the professional product is aiming to increase the leisure guests of Holiday Inn, therefore the content of the posts will focus only on hotel facilities, developments, food and beverage choices, events happening in Plovdiv and interesting facts about the city. This way Holiday Inn will be kept apart of creating misleading posts which might cause conflict or controversies. Moreover, the channels which are being used for the social media plan: Facebook and Instagram have strict data privacy policies. This way Holiday Inn ensures that its social media followers are protected while using the channels.

- **Cultural:** The posts which will be created on the social media channels of Holiday Inn are inclusive and accessible to everyone interested in Holiday Inn. The followers of Holiday Inn can send messages and interact freely. The diversity is ensured through the different posts which are not only focused on the hotel but also the city of Plovdiv and they will be promoted to larger audiences.

3.2 Finance

Budget

For this Social Media Marketing Plan, a budget of €100 is allocated per year. Since posting on social media is free, this amount is going to be used mainly for paid promotion. The posts which are going to be promoted will be ones which are considered most engaging for the audience, targeting broader audience or the ones promoting current promotion of the hotel such as a discount on stay or services.

Costs

1. Salary of the employees

The execution of the Social Media Marketing plan will be the Marketing Manager of Holiday Inn. She will work on creating and scheduling posts and overall manage the social media platforms.

The marketing manager will spend 3 hours weekly to check the posts, schedule posts, reply to questions and requests.
The weekly salary, in this case, is estimated as follows: **9BGN x 3hours= 27BGN** (27BGN/€1.95=€13.80)
The monthly salary is estimated as follows**: 4 weeks per month x 3hours= 12 hours monthly**
Therefore, **12hours x 9BGN= 108 BGN monthly for managing the social media channels**
Yearly salary is estimated: **108BGN x 12months= 1296BGN (1296BGN / €1.95= €665)**
The amounts given in BGN have been calculated in Euro based on the fixed Exchange Rate €1.95.

2. Paid promotion

The budget allocated for paid promotion per year by the client is €1000. This will be divided among the year only for highly important posts which promise to reach a bigger audience or promote current promotion running at Holiday Inn such as a discount on stay.

3. Goal

The goal is: In 2 years from now Holiday Inn will have 40% more leisure guests who booked influenced by social media marketing and the occupancy rate will be increased by at least 20% per month. Information provided by the General Manager of Holiday Inn, the average occupancy rate per month for 2019 is 56.04% and the ADR is 127.41BGN (€65.33)

4. Profit

The desired profit will be calculated by several formulas. First, the average rooms sold per month for 2019 are Total 67 x 56.04% occupancy per month= **37 rooms per month**. Revenue is estimated: 37 rooms month x 127.41BGN= **4, 714BGN (€2 417)** revenue per month

If the occupancy rate increases to 76% per month, profit is estimated as follows:
Total rooms 67 x 76% occupancy per month= **51 rooms per month**

Revenue estimated: 51 rooms x 127.41BGN= **6 497BGN (€3 332)**

Yearly revenue estimated: 6 497BGN x 12months= 77 964BGN Rev/Year

Of course, the estimated profit is only possible if there is an increase in leisure guests and engagement on the social media channels of Holiday Inn.
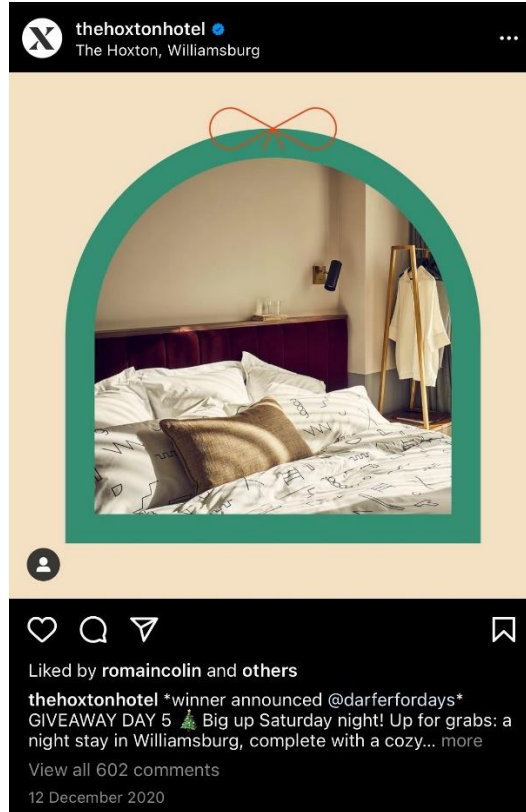
Appendices: Social Media Marketing Plan
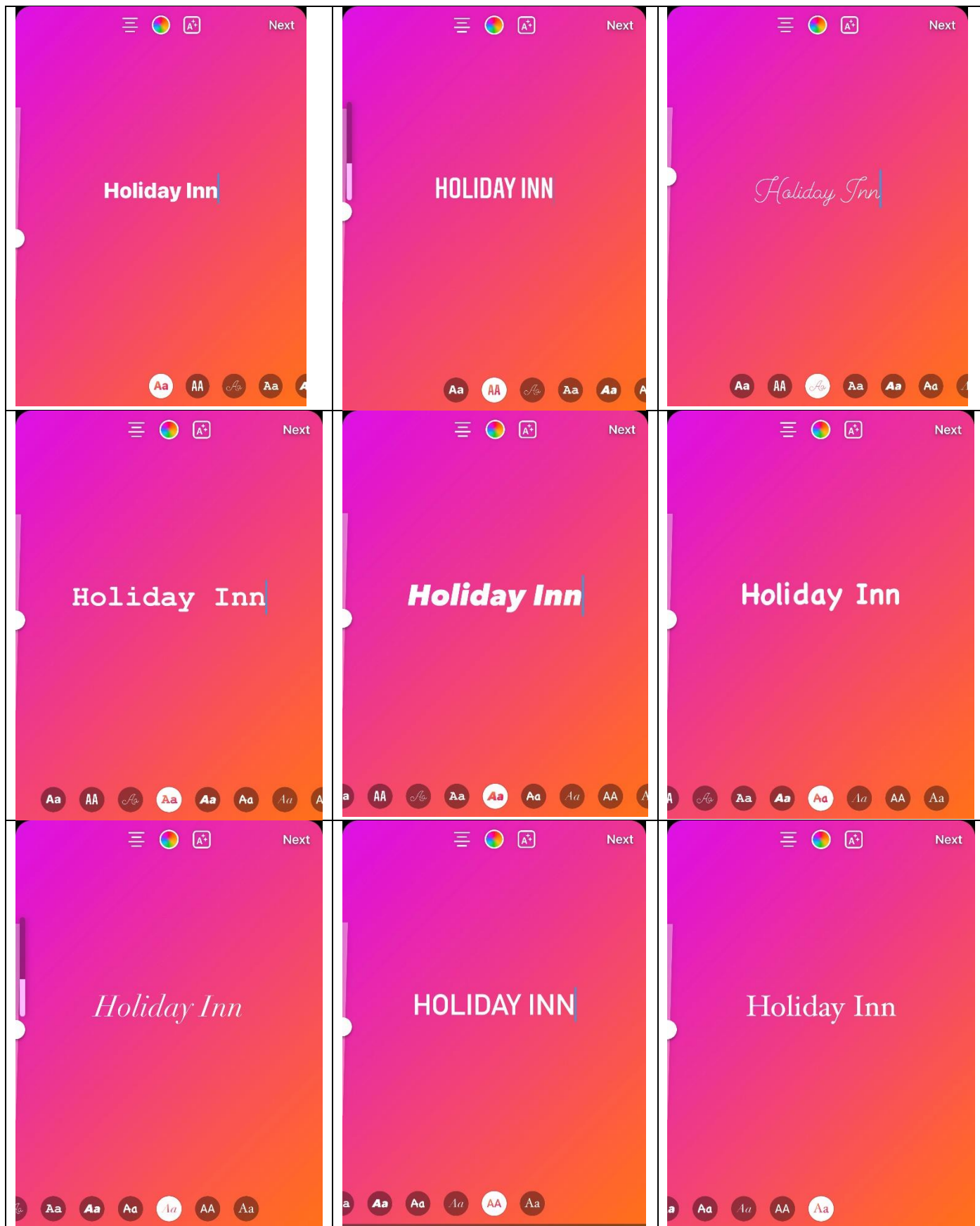
Appendix I:

Target Group Persona:

Holiday Inn Target Group Persona

| Dynamic | Truthful | Motivated |

The Contemporary traveller

- Craving enjoyable moments
- Real relationships with friend and family
- Value is their memories

Frustrations

- The challenges this user would like to avoid.
- An obstacle that prevents this user from achieving their goals.
- Problems with the available solutions.

Bio

The persona of the target group of Holiday Inn is described as a contemporary traveller. Oriented in both leisure and business trips. They enjoy good service, comfortable facilities and casual ambience. They are active on social media and do regular research for accommodation on it.

True to themselves, enjoying good trips in a good relaxed company

Age: 25-35
Work: Business owner
Location: Amsterdam
Character: Archetype

Personality

Introvert	Extrovert
Thinking	Feeling
Sensing	Intuition
Judging	Perceiving

Motivation

- Incentive
- Fear
- Growth
- Power
- Social

Preferred Channels

- Instagram
- Facebook
- Linked In
- Other

Post Visuals

Post Fonts

Appendix: III

Gantt Chart: Posting Overview

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
January							
Week 2	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 3	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 4	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
February							
Week 5	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 6	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 7	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 8	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
March							
Week 9	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 10	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 11	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun
Week 12	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fr	Sat	Sun

Legend:

(Red)	Posts
(Green)	Stories
(Blue)	Paid Promo

January is considered low season therefore keeping the audience engaged and reminding them of the coming spring is important. This way it is ensured influence on the booking decision for the future.

February is important due to the St. Valentine's Holiday, two weeks before the holiday it is good to keep the social media channel updated, especially if there is a promotion running at the hotel.

March is the slow start of spring therefore as the trees and flowers blossom, the social media channels has to be as active as possible.

Facebook and Instagram Reports:

Image: 1.1 (Reportei, 2020)
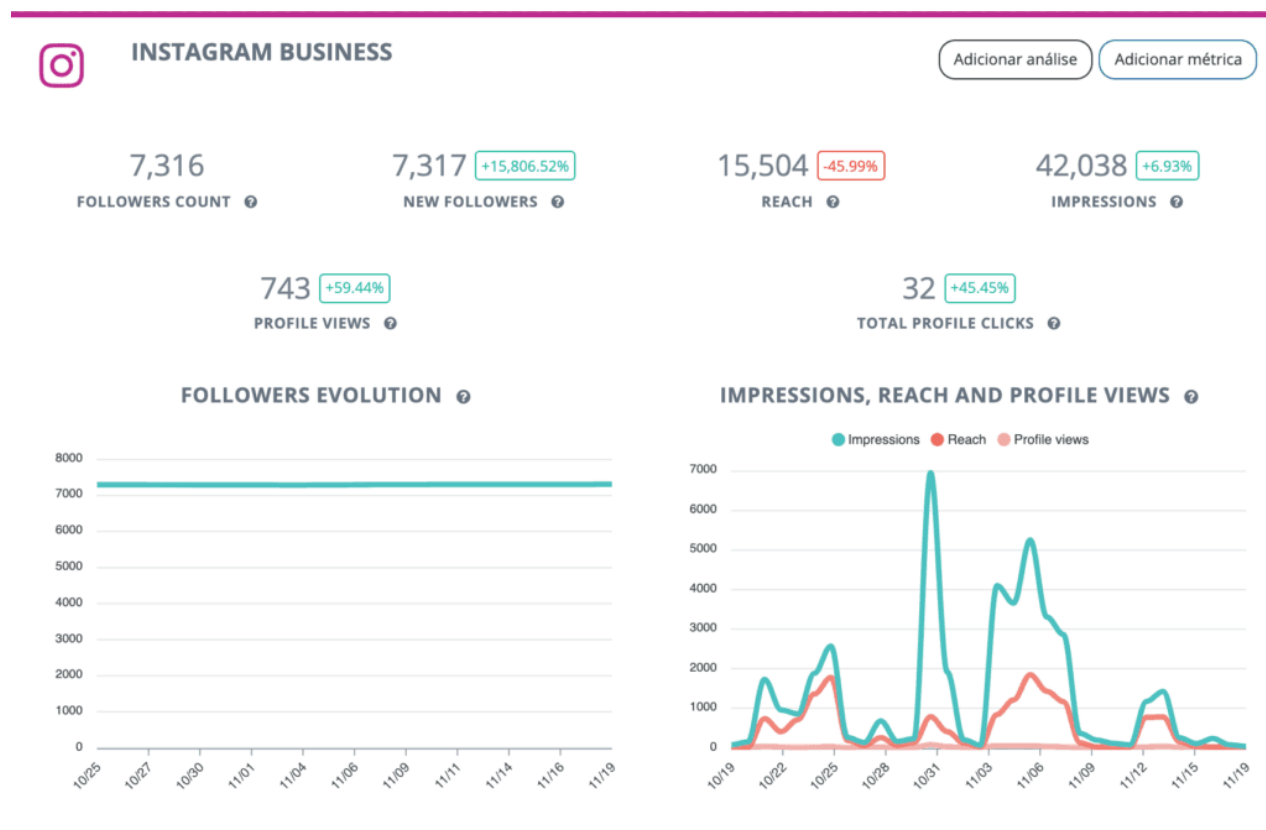
Image: 1.2 (Bocheva, 2019)
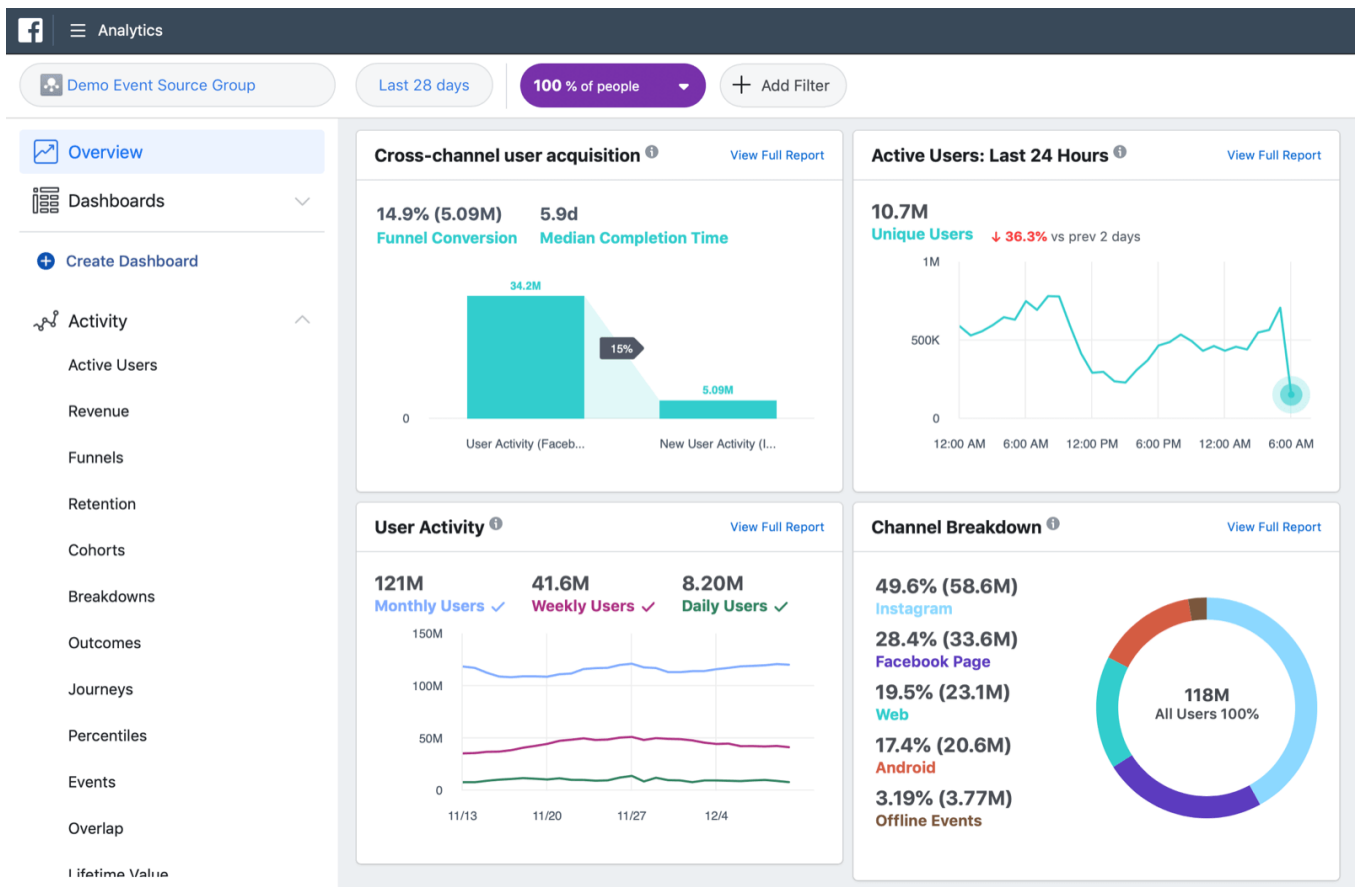
Appendix I:

Literature Research:

The reason for this literature review to be carried out is to find theoretical support for the research project. The literature study is a qualitative research method and it is carried out based on the research questions mentioned above in this report. During the literature study different sources will be analyzed in order to find answers for the research questions. Professional articles and journals will be used for the research but also company data such as documents and policies. The research is qualitative because a content analysis will be carried out in order to study the meanings of and the relationship of the answers to the research questions. The research instruments will be company archives, Google Scholar, journals and libraries. After the literature research, a literature review will be done based on the AAOCC criteria in order to evaluate the quality of the sources.

The literature research will start with giving better understanding of the core concepts and continue with finding information which will support and give answer to the sub- questions.

1. *Marketing communication tools:*

According to (Team, 2020) marketing communication tools are a set of diversified programs which are designed to communicate with the target group of a business. It is important that each marketing tool is best suited for specific marketing campaigns in order to reach the audience at various stages of the marketing funnel and across different channels. Moreover, it is important to define the meaning of marketing communication means. As (Labanauskaitė, Fiore, & Stašys, 2020) states, marketing communication means as the critical success in the tourism and hospitality industry. E- marketing could be defined as integrated process where a business sends a marketing message to a target segment by using internet and other digital- based marketing tools. Additionally, (Labanauskaitė, Fiore, & Stašys, 2020) says that e- marketing can make use of traditional communication tools like sales promotion, advertising, website or email campaigns. The 8P marketing mix helps to effectively implement the communication strategy, to reach the target audience and prompt for an action by the audience.

(Bhasin, 2019) defines a couple of marketing communication tools. Above the line marketing (ALT) and Below the line marketing (BLT). Above the line marketing (ALT) consists of campaigns which are designed for mass appeal. Usually, businesses which does not have specific target group or a particular demographic to aim for. They want to focus on a huge diversified market in general. Some examples of ALT marketing are:

- TV
- Radio
- Print media
- Cinemas
- Outdoor media (billboards, banners)

While Below the line marketing is used by companies which has specific target group and a specific demographics to aim for. Examples of BLT marketing are:

- Internet marketing
- Social media marketing
- Email marketing
- Sales promotion

1.1 *Social media marketing:*

In order to show the importance of social media marketing tools and platforms for the marketing communication plan, several sources are being used. They are focusing on giving brief definitions and examples. These examples will help the client understand why having good maintained marketing tools and platforms is so important for defining the target group and engaging it online.

According to (Evans, 2010) social media is participatory online media where news, photos, videos and podcasts are made available via social media web sites via submission and are normally accompanied by voting process to make via media items become more popular. This way social media is characterized by the content they leave on social media sites and by the voting process which represents the perceptions of the users of the particular content. Another definition is represented by (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008) who refer to social media as "usergenerated content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet". The social media are unique in a way that they are "media rich" and empowers users to share their opinions, insights, experiences, contact and contacts with their friends and family through multiple content forms. Identical to multimedia, social media allows multiple content forms such as text, audio, images, animation, video and other interactivity content forms. In the meantime, users are able to learn more about favorite products and brands. Social media further focus on messaging while having huge potential to distribute content to a large number of people (Cole & House, 2006).

According to (G. & Assaad, 2011) during the recent years, a change in the relationship between companies and customers has revealed. The customer has received more and more control over and through the communication regarding the company and its products. The core of every business is the customers and social networking represents an opportunity to build even closer and more profitable relationships with them. Therefore, it very important that a company responds to this change accordingly. However, social media marketing communication might harm a company's reputation by means of negative viral marketing over which it has little or no control. Social media marketing communication uses social media to reach the target audience by means of numerous tools. These tools encourage the consumers to get involved with the organization's brand.

1.2 Social Media Posting Times

According to Arens (2020) social media algorithms are constantly changing and when it comes to posting at the right moment and day things might get a bit challenging. The author suggests checking the social media profiles of the company/ person audience via reports and find out when they are mostly active. It is suggested that the best day for posting which ensures highest engagement is on Wednesday between 11AM- 1,2 PM and the worst is on Sunday when barely no engagement is seen. According to (Santora, 2020) a successful social media strategy comes when more details of the audience are known. Therefore, checking when the targeted audience is active is a key step. Besides that, every social media has its own peak time. For instance, Linked In which is business-oriented platform has its peak time during business hours. Facebook and Instagram are mostly depending on the specific audience. Santora (2020).

2. Leisure guests:

According to (Green, 2020) leisure travelers are of the most important travel segments. Generally, leisure travelers consist of all ages, genres and cultures. Leisure travelers are especially interested in the location of the place of accommodation, price, unique experiences, helpful staff members and recreational facilities and spa services. When creating marketing campaigns, a marketeer should take into account what to focus on in each post. Exposing the unique selling points of the property like nearby recreational facilities or historical places.

(Lavanchy, 2018) states that the leisure industry is a segment of the business which is focused on recreation, entertainment, sports and tourism. Business travel is more limited since individuals are working while traveling rather than entertaining. The other two main differences between the two is wants versus necessity. The hotel has to respond to the needs of the business guests since this can be determining rather, they choose the place for accommodation or not. While leisure guests can compromise some services and facilities if for instance the location of the hotel is ideal. (Lavanchy, 2018)

According to (Butler, 2018) the different travelers will choose differently on how to spend their free time. Some might focus on city trips while others might focus on nature and adrenaline- filled experiences. There is another category of travelers and they are the so called Bleisure travelers. They simply combine leisure with busines travel. This target group can be interesting for Holiday Inn since the location of the hotel is suitable for both leisure and business purposes.

In order to define exactly what type of leisure guests are visiting Holiday Inn surveys will be conducted on their official Facebook page. Segmentation model will be used and this can be found in the Social Media Marketing Plan (page:7 & 8)

3. Leisure guest's social media behaviour

In a report by Anderson (2011) it is paid attention that social media marketing is essentially important for influencing guest's booking decision and behaviour. having proper social media strategy will influence as well rate and occupancy of a hotel. An article by McCarthy et al. (2010) touches on the same topic, how social media marketing impacts the hospitality industry. Social media have created a new distribution channel and opened a deep well for marketing research. However, particularly leisure travelers are affected by it and where they will book their stay. The stronger the message on social media the more chance of choosing a destination and/ or hotel. With regards to gathering information for a hotel stay the principal dividing line occurs between business travelers and leisure travelers. Business travelers usually count on hotel recommendations from their company, even though many of them use search engines or online travel agents for hotel search. Business travelers are less interested in recommendations from friends and colleagues than leisure travelers who cited personal recommendations from friends and family. Their sources are also travel related websites, search engines and OTA's.

4. Stakeholders

Last but not least, definition and importance of the stakeholders will be given. As known stakeholders play important role in each business. Therefore, it is important to define their impact by conducting literature review. The stakeholders specifically involved in the project will be the General Manager and Marketing Manager. The project will impact them by means of introducing new operations to the employees and improving of the social media marketing. The General Manager has to inform the external stakeholders of possible changes which concern them as well as the rest of the employees of Holiday Inn.

Generally, every company has many stakeholders. The stakeholders are the people interested in a business. Starting from employees to loyal customers, these people are broadening the field of your business making it more active and recognizable (Gartenstein, 2018)

Another important point it that a business should develop strong reputation and it must be able to engage in subtle relationships and to manage feedback between the business and the stakeholders (Dickinson-Delaporte, Beverland , & Lindgreen, 2010) on the basis of two-way communication. When there is a long- term commitment between a company and stakeholders this can ensure efficiency of the performance even when a crisis strikes (Dickinson-Delaporte, Beverland , & Lindgreen, 2010). (Money & Hillenbrand, 2007) confirmed that the mutual trust between the organization and its stakeholders is the start of long- term success. (Money & Hillenbrand, 2007) substantiated that a long- term busines success is fully up to the relationships between the company and the stakeholders. If there is a responsibility in the relationships this will determine the future financial success, a sustainability and a high corporate reputation.

Axial Coding Table:

Coding of Interview transcripts table			
Concepts	**Axial coding**	**Open Coding**	**Fragments**
Background Information	General introduction of the interview	Small talk	12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23 2.4, 2.5, 2.6. 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11
		Reason for interviewing the respondent	41, 42, 43 2.38, 2.39, 2.40, 2.41, 2.42, 2.43. 3.36, 3.37, 3.38, 3.39, 3.40, 3.41, 3.42, 3.43
		Purpose of the interview	7, 8 2.32, 2.33, 2.34, 2.35, 2.36, 3.36, 3.37, 3.38, 3.39, 3.40, 3.41, 3.42, 3.43
		Introduction of the core concept	44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49. 2.45, 2.46, 2.47
	Information about the respondent	Characteristics of the respondent	52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61 2.50, 2.51, 2.52, 2.53, 2.54, 2.55, 2.56, 2.57, 2.58, 2.59, 2.60 3.37, 3.38, 3.45, 3.46, 3.47, 3.48, 3.49, 3.50, 3.51
Holiday Inn Guests	Leisure & Business Guests	Types of guests	69, 71, 72, 73, 102, 199, 201 2.69, 2.85, 2.88, 2.89, 2.90, 2.91, 3.64, 3.65, 3.66, 3.67, 3.70, 3.71, 3.72,
		Demographics	78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85. 2.73, 2.79, 2.80, 2.81, 2.82, 2.83 3.73, 3.74, 3.77, 3.80,
		Demands	103, 104 2.105, 2.106, 2.107, 2.108, 2.112, 2.113, 2.115, 3.86, 3.87, 3.88, 3.93, 3.94, 3.114, 3.115, 3.116, 3.203, 3.204, 3.207, 3.208, 3.209
		Guest satisfaction	239, 240, 241,
		Length of stay	83, 89, 93, 109, 110, 111, 112, 116, 117, 118, 119. 2.74, 2.76, 2.77,
		Reason for stay	99, 100, 116 2.73, 2.74, 2.88, 2.99, 2.100, 2.101, 2.115, 2.116, 2.117. 3.93, 3.94
Social Media Marketing	**Social Media**	Engagement	128, 180, 181, 182, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281

			2.142, 2.143, 2.145, 2.146, 2.212, 2.213, 2.214, 2.215, 2.344, 2.345, 2.346, 2.347, 2.348. 3.142, 3.143, 3.144
		Channels	2.154, 2.156, 2.198, 2.199, 2.206, 2.207, 2.208, 2.260, 2.261, 2.263, 2.278, 2.279,
		Promotions	160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 292, 293, 294, 295. 2.163, 2.164, 2.165, 2.166, 2.167, 2.171, 2.172, 2.173, 2.174, 2.175, 2.176, 2.177, 2.227, 2.228, 2.326, 2.327, 2.329, 2.330, 2.331, 2.332, 2.333, 2.334, 2.335, 2.336 3.153, 3.154, 3.155, 3.156, 3.185, 3.186, 3.237
		Social Media Marketing campaigns	2.239, 2.240, 2.241, 2.242
		Holiday Inn social media channels	148, 149, 150, 151, 2.135, 2.136, 2.141, 3.162, 3.163,
		Promotion frequency	2.309, 2.310, 2.312, 2.317, 2.318,
		Budget	309, 310, 311, 312, 327, 328, 329,

Univariate Analysis

Characteristics Target Group. Survey 1: Existing Holiday Inn Guests

For the purpose of the social media marketing plan, the characteristics of the target group are essential to be known. For a better understanding of their demographics and social media behaviour, a survey was conducted online on the Facebook page of Holiday Inn. These insights will be used for the social media marketing plan so that the posts and campaigns are in line with the target group interests and online behaviour. They survey was mainly distributed among existing Holiday Inn guests.

The first question of the survey is*: Have you ever been a guest at Holiday Inn Plovdiv?*
This question was defining if the people who started filling the survey were actual guests of the hotel or not. If the given answer was "no" the survey ended automatically. This is an important step since it ensures the validity of the survey.

Q1: Survey 1	Outcome:
Have you ever been a guest at Holiday Inn?	- Yes (72.22%) - No (27.78%)

In the table below a summary of the results is presented. Such as demographics, social media behaviour and social media preferences.

Characteristics	Outcome
Gender	- Male (8.57%) - Female (91.43%) - Other (0.00%) - Prefer not to answer (0.00%)
Age	- 18-24 (17.14%) - 25-34 (37.14%) - 35-49 (37.14%) - 50-64+ (8.57%)
Income	- €0- 15, 000 (50.00%) - €15, 000- 20, 000 (17.65%) - €20, 000- 40, 000 (5.88%) - €50, 000+ (0.00%) - Prefer not to answer (26.47%)
Nationality	- Bulgarian (91.43%) - Romania (5.71%) - Dutch (2.86%) - German (0.00%) - Belgian (0.00%) - Austrian (0.00%) - American (0.00%) - Asian (0.00%) - Other (0.00%)
Country	- Bulgaria (77.14%) - Romania (2.86%) - The Netherlands (8.57%) - Germany (0.00%) - Belgium (0.00%) - Austria (2.86%) - America (0.00%) - Other (8.57%)
Business travels per year	- 1- 2 times per year (37.50%) - 3- 4 times per year (12.50%) - 5+ times per year (12.50%) - I do not travel for business (37.50%)

Leisure travels per year	- 1- 2 times per year (28.13%) - 3- 4 times per year (43.75%) - 5+ times per year (28.13%) - I do not travel for leisure (0.00%)
Holiday Inn Business stays	- Yes (30.30%) - No (66.67%) - Other (3.03%)
Holiday Inn Leisure stays	- Yes (75.00%) - No (21.88%) - Other (3.13%)
Rate of stay	- Excellent (81.25%) - Good (18.75%) - Average (0.00%) - Poor (0.00%)

Social media usage for accommodation purposes	- Never (6.25%) - Hardly ever (3.13%) - Sometimes (40.63%) - Probably yes (12.50%) - Most of the times (21.88%) - Always (15.63%)
Social media choice	- Instagram (33.33%) - Facebook (56.41%) - Twitter (0.00%) - LinkedIn (0.00%) - All of the above (5.13%) - None of the above (5.13%)
Types of posts	- Single pictures (12.90%) - Carrousel photos (more than 1 picture in a post) (20.97%) - Stories (16.13%) - Boomerangs (4.84%) - Text- only posts (4.84%) - Posts leading to a travel blog (11.29%) - Posts leading to the accommodation's website (12.90%) - Other posts (namely) (0.00%) - Videos (16.13%)
Most engaging types of posts	- Single pictures (16.92%) - Carousel photos (more than 1 picture in a post) (26.15%) - Boomerangs (4.62%) - Other (namely) (0.00%) - Stories (23.08%) - Text- only posts (6.15%) - Videos (23.08%)
Social media activity (time of the day)	- In the morning (07:00- 09:00) (8.00%) - In the morning (10:00- 12:00) (14.00%) - During the afternoon (13:00-15:00) (10.00%) - During the afternoon (16:00-18:00) (10.00%) - During the evening (19:00- 21:00) (30.00%) - During the evening (22:00-00:00) (28.00%)
Social media activity (hours per day)	- 1-2 hours (85.19%) - 3-4 hours (11.11%) - 5+hours (3.70%)
Types of posts of most interest	- Accommodation services (44.44%) - Facilities (29.63%) - Accommodation outlook (14.81%) - Picture of the surroundings (3.70%) - Other (7.41%)
Holiday Inn social media interest (if people who booked their stay at Holiday Inn checked its social media channels**)**	- Yes (56.67%) - No (33.33%) - Other (10.00%)
Information found at Holiday Inn's social media channels	- Information about the hotel (33.33%) - About the services they offer (22.22%)

	- About the location (22.22%) - Promotions (22.22%)
Usefulness of information (on social media channels of Holiday In)	- Yes (76.47%) - Maybe (17.65%) - No (5.88%) - Other (0.00%)
Suggestions from respondents for social media	- More posts to be added - More interactivity like polls
Irrelevant content on social media	- Yes (23.53%) - No (76.47%)

In order to create social media marketing plan which is also effective for new potential guests of Holiday Inn, a second survey was conducted. It was distributed over different social media channels like Instagram, Facebook and Linked In. The survey was also sent through WhatsApp to potential guests.

The same principle from the first survey applies to the second survey as well. The first question asked is "*Are you interested in visiting city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria and choose a hotel for your accommodation?*" if the responded chooses one of the categories: "definitely not" or "probably not" the survey ends automatically if he chooses "maybe", "probably yes" or "definitely yes" the survey continues to the next question.

Below you can find a table summarizing the results from the survey.

Q1: Survey 2	Outcome
Are you interested in visiting city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria and choose a hotel for your accommodation?	- Definitely not (1.96%) - Probably not (7.84%) - Maybe (7.84%) - Probably yes (31.37%) - Definitely yes (50.98%) - Don't know (0.00%)

| Characteristics	Outcome
Gender	- Male (22.22%) - Female (75.56%) - Other (2.22%)
Income	- €0 - €15, 000 (60.00%) - €15,000 - €20, 000 (26.67%) - €20, 000 - €40, 000 (11.11%) - €50,000+ (2.22%)
Nationality	- Bulgarian (75.56%) - Romanian (13.33%) - Dutch (6.67%) - German (0.00%) - Belgian (0.00%) - Austrian (0.00%) - Other (4.44%)
Country	- Bulgaria (62.22%) - Romania (6.67%) - The Netherlands (26.67%) - Germany (0.00%) - Belgium (0.00%) - Austria (0.00%) - Other (4.44%)
Social media usage during free time	- Never (0.00%) - Hardly ever (2.22%) - Sometimes (28.89%) - Most of the times (24.44%) - Always (44.44%)

| Social media activity (hours per day)	- 1- 2hours (45.45%) - 3- 4hours (45.45%) - 5+ hours (9.09%)
Leisure travels (average)	- 1- 2 times per year (28.89%) - 3- 4 times per year (33.33%) - 5+ times per year (35.56%) - I don't travel for leisure purposes (2.22%)
Business travels (average)	- 1- 2 times per year (22.22%) - 3- 4 times per year (13.33%) - 5+ times per year (8.89%) - I don't travel for business purposes (55.56%)
Channel used for business travels	- Via Online Travel Agent (13.95%) - Via my work (23.26%) - LinkedIn (0.00%) - Someone else books it for me (25.58%) - Other (37.21%)
Channels used for leisure travels	- Via Online Travel Agent (37.78%) - Website of the accommodation (26.67%) - Someone else books it for me (6.67%) - Travel Agent (4.44%) - Other (24.44%)
Research on social media after booking stay	- Never (4.44%) - Hardly ever (22.22%) - Sometimes (31.11%) - Most of the times (22.22%) - Always (20.00%)
Channels used for accommodation research	- Instagram (36.21%) - Facebook (37.93%) - Twitter (0.00%) - LinkedIn (1.72%) - YouTube (6.90%) - Other (17.24%)
Most engaging posts on social media	- Single pictures with text (28.13%) - Carousel pictures with text (more than 1 picture) (21.88%) - Boomerangs (3.13%) - Videos (21.88%) - Stories (23.44%) - Other (1.56%)
Social media activity (time of the day)	- In the morning (07:00- 09:00) (10.67%) - In the morning (10:00- 12:00) (17.33%) - During the afternoon (13:00-15:00) (8.00%) - During the afternoon (16:00-18:00) (12.00%) - During the evening (19:00- 21:00) (26.67%) - During the evening (22:00-00:00) (25.33%)
Research about accommodation on social media (average hours)	- 1-2 hours per day (90.63%) - 3-4 hours per day (9.38%) - 5+ hours per day (0.00%)
Most helpful posts when researching about accommodation	- Single pictures with text (18.42%) - Carousel pictures with text (21.05%) - Posts leading to the website of the property (21.05%) - Videos of the property (25.00%) - Boomerangs (0.00%) - Stories (13.16%) - Other (1.32%)
Follow of influencers	- Never (12.50%) - Hardly ever (18.75%) - Sometimes (43.75%) - Most of the times (15.63%) - Always (9.38%)
Accommodation advice from influencers	- Never (0.00%) - Hardly ever (13.64%) - Sometimes (72.73%) - Most of the times (9.09%) - Always (4.55%)

Most useful channel for accommodation research	- Instagram (43.75%) - Facebook (39.58%) - Twitter (0.00%) - LinkedIn (2.08%) - Other (14.58%)

Tree Diagram- Surveys

Sample 1: Existing Guests of Holiday Inn
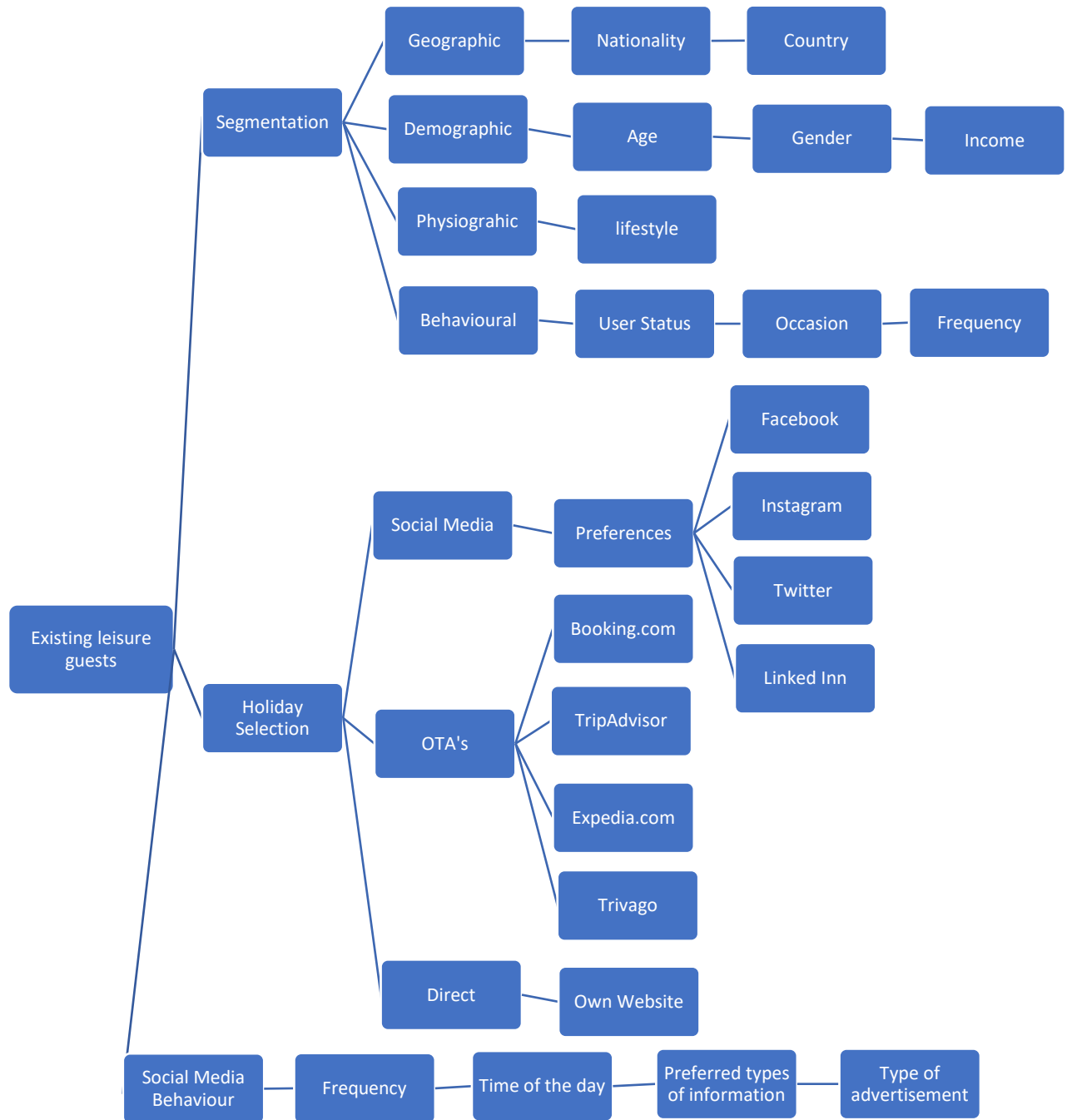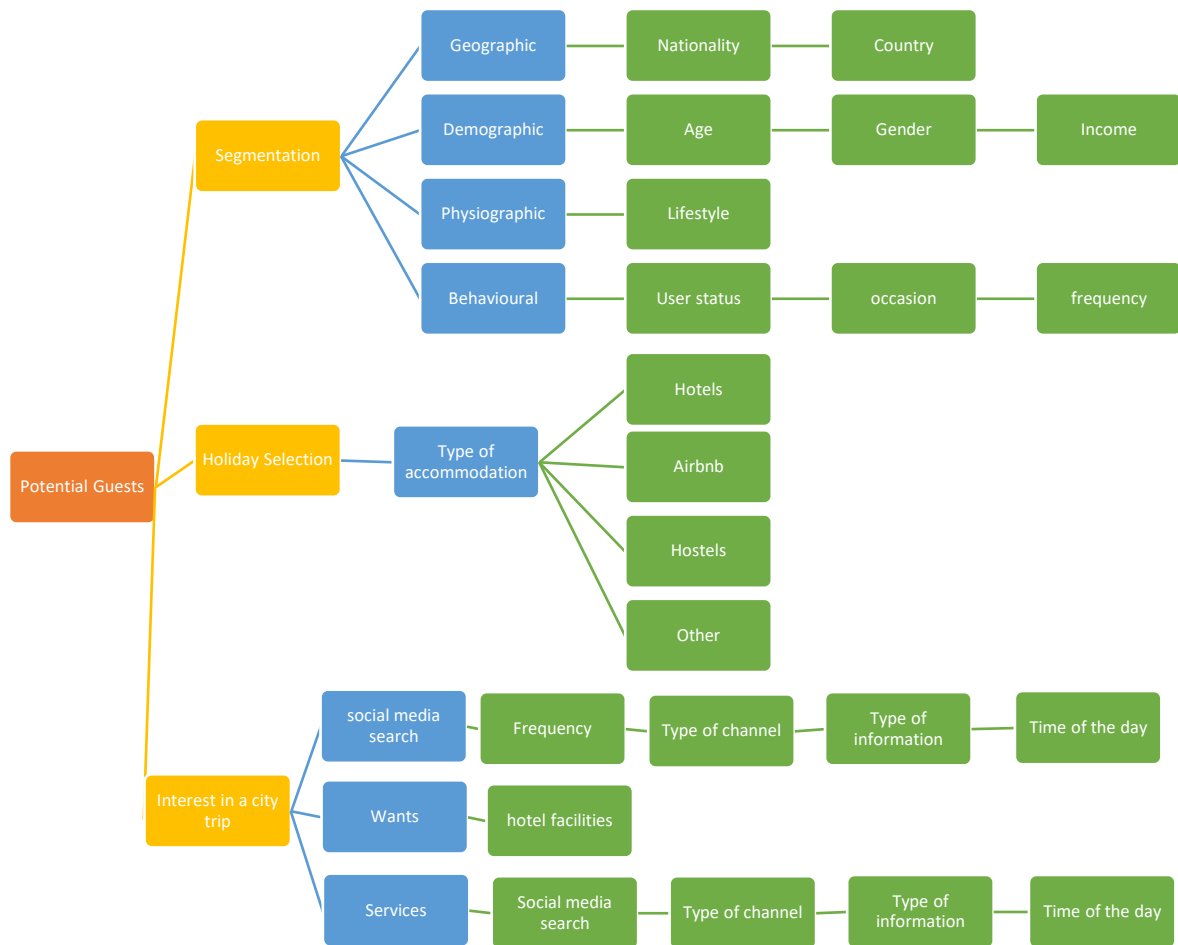
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