

Social media in resort business

Case study: Intercontinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort

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Abstract

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Title of the thesis Social media in resort business Case study: Intercontinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort		
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Abstract <p>The thesis is made with the purpose to have better understanding of social media, the use of it as well as how it can be applied to a business using the SOSTAC framework.</p> <p>The information written in the thesis is collected from various sources include mainly published books, online websites as well as the survey result.</p> <p>The research method applied is quantitative method to analysing collected data from a questionnaire distributed to 98 respondents, who are originally guests from the resort. The analysis of the resort aimed to serve as a complimentary reference for anyone who would like to know more about the situation of social media in Vietnam as well as some social media insights into how a specific media resort case is working on their channels.</p>		
Keywords Social media, digital marketing, Vietnam, hotel, resort		

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1 Introduction

The world of marketing has seen a lot of revolutionary breakthroughs in this decade, especially with the rise of technology. Traditional marketing is slowly but gradually transitioned to digital marketing, in which social media is a vital part. Realizing this trend, the author starts the thesis with the hope to have better understanding of the basis of social media as well as the advance application of social media marketing into business performance.

In the thesis, the author aims to decode the definition of social media and the reason why it has reached such wide popularity in a short time with some phenomenal example cases such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. The revolution of such social media platforms has brought to the world enormous changes, either good or bad. And we, as bystanders, cannot help but being dragged into the overwhelming wave of information explosion, either willingly or not. Hence, hopefully armed with carefully researched knowledge, we can make for ourselves informed and rational decisions, survive and make the most out this hectic world.

2 Social media in general

2.1 What is social media?

The term social media is widely known to average Internet users as names of popular platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or Snapchat. However, there is more to say about it digging into the core of the term. Social media marketing is an important subsegment of digital marketing. Social media marketing involves all the marketing activities spurred in to the social media platforms to encourage online engagement between the customers and the brands. Social media marketing features the act of monitoring and facilitating customer interaction and participation in the brand's profile page. (Chaffey D. et al., 2019)

As stated by Kotler et al., social media has made a revolution changing the way how people traditionally connect and interact with each other by eliminating the geographic and demographic barriers. Furthermore, in the process of flattening the world, social media actively contributes to the booming of globalisation and international collaboration. Social media nowadays is a step forward social inclusivity as it eases the human urge of being accepted as a part of the community or being able to live harmoniously with others regardless of differences. (Kotler et al. p.16, 2017)

The development of Internet strongly facilitates business transparency, wanted or unwanted, with the help of social media. Social networks like Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube have hosted review sections where users can share their own experiences as well as read other reviews if needed. There are also sites that specializes in review content and gets extremely popular nowadays such as TripAdvisor and Yelp, enabling their users to have informed choice thanks to the wisdom of the crowd. Reading reviews has become a trend that transform how the customers perceive the information and the ground based on which they make decision. Google research reveals that eight out of ten smartphone users in the United States are making mobile research while shopping in-store. Such an impulsive yet efficient buying behaviour that companies should notice in order to modify marketing approach accordingly. Consequently, brands are more likely to be caught red-handed for false marketing and unverifiable promises in no time. (Kotler et al. p.21-34, 2017)

Social media has made a revolution out of traditional content marketing. Thanks to social media, content marketing has become the new advertisement hashtags used in every social media post are now playing the role of traditional taglines. Instead of traditional content marketing played on traditional media, customers now win the choice of freedom to watch the marketing content whenever and wherever they want. (Kotler et al. p.52, 2017)

Being the community platform contributed mainly by the customers, social media acts towards the benefits of customers themselves. For instance, YouTube TrueView advertisements can mostly be skipped after five seconds. This means that the challenge is set within only 5 seconds for advertisers to impress and capture the attention of the customers. The challenge encourages better marketing content with more considerations invested in the customer's preferences instead of just huge budget thrown by big enterprises to customers through traditional limited marketing channels. (Kotler et al. p.103, 2017)

2.2 SOSTAC

SOSTAC is a planning system widely used by professionals to create plans for various occasions. SOSTAC is the abbreviation of Situation analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Actions and Control. Each stage can be overlapped and complemented each other for revision and refine. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 22, 2017)

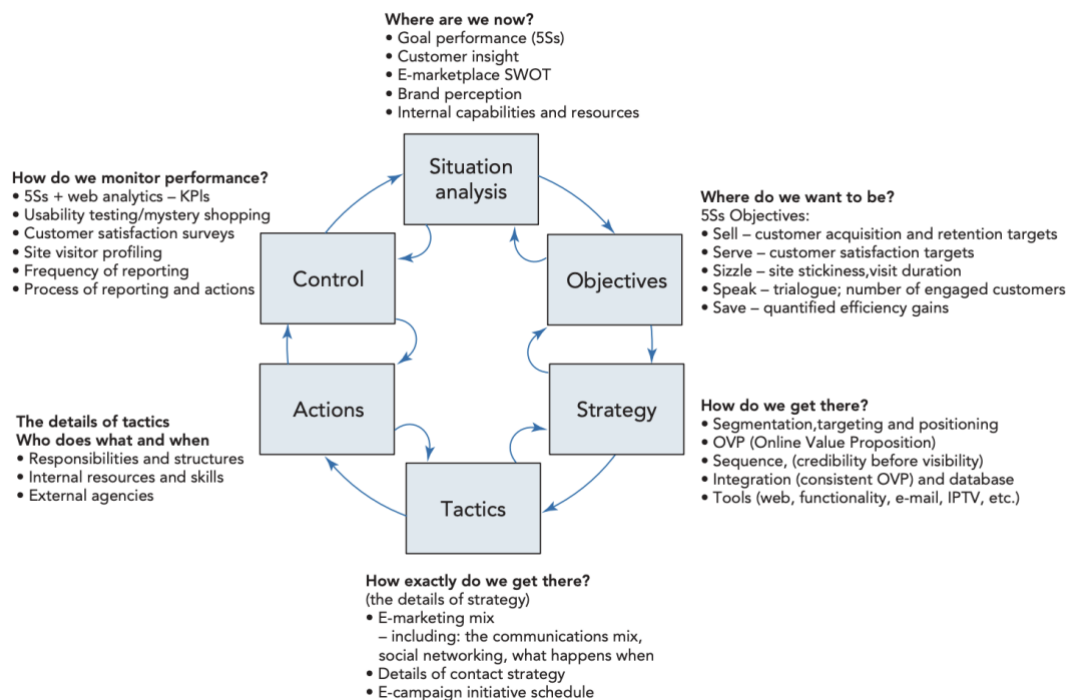


Figure 1 SOSTAC planning framework (Chaffey D. et al. p. 22, 2017)

2.2.1 Situation Analysis

Situation analysis is the beginning step of the SOSTAC framework answering the question “Where are we now?” The standard situation analysis is a full coverage of details about customer, competitors, partners and intermediaries, competencies, performance and results, as well as an analysis of market trends. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 562, 2017)

Customer analysis is about scrutinizing these big question “Who?”, “Why?”, and “How?” as most information marketers need from customer will eventually fall into one of the three above categories. The marketing plan will not start until a marketer knows about who he is going to impress. A marketer needs to identify the target customer and market traffic, whether the customer is from the new segment or an existing database in order to manifest the most suitable approach. The next step comes the most difficult part of the analysis - to find out what really triggers the buying behaviour, or the leaving. This is the challenging part for marketers because sometimes, the customers find it impossible themselves to understand why they made such purchases. The final part of customer analysis is easier compared to

other parts, it is to find out the customer journey and their touchpoints. It is the process after the customer have made the buying decision, and are actually looking for the way to do it. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 562-574, 2017)

Beside the customers, there exists a market element that makes the market a competition – the competitors. Before assessing the competitors, the marketers need to have thorough vision about their own organization compared to the competitors. The SWOT analysis is an old-but-gold method when it comes to this matter. The well-known abbreviation stands for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats, the subjects the marketers need to master about their own client before tackling other rivals. Only then, the analysis of the competitors can be directed correctly with answers for the question about the competitor's strength and weaknesses and how the competitors may compete against the client. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 562-574, 2017)

Situation analysis includes the last but crucial part called competencies analysis and performance analysis to identify where the business is underperforming and where it is excelling. These final analysis helps the marketers to evaluate and modify the whole process from the actual results. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 562-574, 2017)

2.2.2 Objectives

While the situation analysis lays the concrete foundation for the whole marketing plan, objectives is the target, the arrival destination that the plan is aiming at. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 574, 2017)

There are many theories on objective approach. One of them is the Big 4 objectives. Big 4 objectives focus on revenue/sale, margin/profit, customer satisfaction/loyalty and brand value/brand awareness/brand preference. According to this approach, as long as the targets for these four criteria are met, the objectives set are considered sensible. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 574-581, 2017)

The objective approach chosen to appear on SOSTAC model is 5Ss. This approach consists of Sell, Serve, Speak, Save and Sizzle. Sell stands for grow sales. Serve means add value by giving the customers excellent service and products. Speak guides the plan to actually communicate with the customers and through that collect the useful insights for better customer understanding. Save reminds the marketers

of cost reduction. Sizzle can be seen as an innovative breakthrough out of ordinary acts to bring the customers the unique and creative service, enabling exotic experiences and enhance brand awareness and recognition. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 574-581, 2017)

The RACE framework looks at objectives through a different lens. RACE stands for Reach, Act, Convert and Engage. Reach is the effort to raise brand awareness and boost customer traffic to the main sites of the brand. Act inspires initial interaction with content which later promote leads. Convert is the beloved result when the sales is actually increase, online and offline. Engage means the follow-up engagement between the organization and the customers to build loyalty and advocacy. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 574-581, 2017)

After all planning and execution, the final question to ask in regard of objectives is that “Are they SMART – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-related, enough?” (Chaffey D. et al. p. 574-581, 2017)

2.2.3 Strategy

Having decided on the start and the destination, now what we need to care about is the journey. Strategy helps plan us a smooth journey to achieve our goals. Strategy is exploit whatever available to arrive at the target destination. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

SOSTAC digital marketing guide has pointed out nine key components to consider when creating a digital marketing strategy. These components are shorted as TOPPP SITE, and each of them stand for a criterion that marketers should at least gaze into before planning any strategic move. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Target markets is the first abbreviation. Target is the repetitive term on marketing plan, just because it is too important. There are many tools nowadays designed to help marketers identify the most suitable target by evaluate if that target is worth the time and resources invested in. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Objectives is also a repeated term that we just mention in the previous section. In the case of strategy planning, it is a crucial decision to confirm the priority objective - whether to attract new customer or to retain the previous one. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Positioning plays an important role in the strategy planning, as it will influence and direct all the next stages. Positioning explicitly demonstrates how the brand will be perceived in the mind of the customer. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Process is the act of how the plan is going to be executed to meet the target. This step includes most of the actions required from start to finish such as introducing the new service, instructing how it will be promoted, performing the sales, dealing with complaints, etc. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Partnership means all the work related to the strategic partners, including introducing, strengthening or reducing the state of partnership. Partnership is the activity that benefits both parties which share the mutual goals as well as mutual working ethics. Picking the correct partnership can help efficiently push up the quality of performance and move closer to the target. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Sequence of stages is the step by step towards the objective. Aforementioned RACE is a good example of sequence of stages that shortly but completely described the necessary steps of a standard customer journey. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Integration is a critical process to convey the social data to customer relationship management or contact data. An integrated customer profiling process should also be implemented to outbound and inbound campaigns. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

Tactical tools and Engagement are the last steps of the strategy but still deserve the attention for insure an effective and smooth planning till the end. Tactics stand for the major tactical tools that can be applied to make the marketing work more doable. Engagement involves different activities to encourage more interactions from the side of customers. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 581-590, 2017)

2.2.4 Tactics, Actions and Control

Tactics, Actions and Control are the three last parts of SOSTAC. These are grouped together because they have similar characteristics of being the empirical stages of the planning. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 590, 2017)

Tactics are the strategy broken down. Tactics focus on executing smaller and short-term goals, which are eventually combined to the whole strategy with ultimate objectives. Tactics does not conflict with strategy, and only exists after strategy is finalized. There are specific tactics required specific tasks that demand flexibility and adaptability from the marketers. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 590-610, 2017)

Actions is the main execution part where all the paper planning come down to reality and be put into practice. A good execution can be achieved by logical and realistic details, processes, procedures and prompt checklists. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 590-610, 2017)

Control is the last step of the plan, but it actually takes place throughout the journey, start to finish. Control can be built as a system to keep track of key performance through certain indicators. The control plan must be able to answer the questions asking the necessary KPI, the responsible person for each task, the frequency of each check-up as well as the one to deal with arising problems. (Chaffey D. et al. p. 590-610, 2017)

3 The case study

3.1 Social media in Vietnam

Datareportal 2021 has given away strategic insights into how people in Vietnam actually indulge in the digital world. By January 2021, raising 0.9% within a year, Vietnam's population reaches the number of 97.75 million, in which female accounts for 50,1% of the population. 37,5% of Vietnamese is living in urban areas. Nevertheless, there are up to 68,72 million internet users in Vietnam as of January 2021, increasing 551000 compared to the statistic of 2020. 72 million Vietnamese are social media users, equivalent to 73,7% of the whole national population. The number of mobile connections is also absurdly high according to this research, claiming 157,9% of the total population are having active mobile connections, equivalent to approximately 154,4 million users. The explanation for this seemingly illogical figure is that one person is allowed to have more than one mobile connection in Vietnam, so it is possible that the measured result exceeds 100% of the total population.

Statcounter has collected the data about social network usage in Vietnam and create the below chart to display the social media market contribution here.

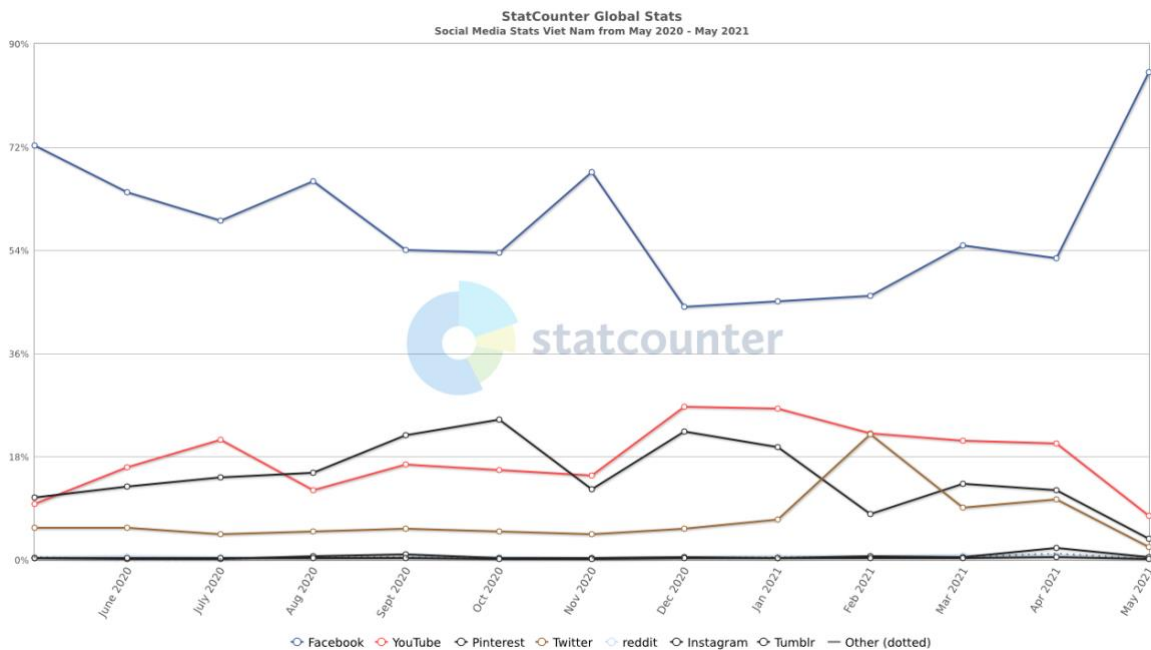


Figure 2 Social Media Stats Vietnam April 2020 - April 2021 (Statcounter)

Statcounter chart features the performances of the 6 top social media platforms: Facebook, Youtube, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram and reddit. As described in the chart, Facebook takes up to 85,32% of the whole market and the other platforms account for the rest of the market shares, for instance YouTube 7,53%, Pinterest 3,59%, Twitter 2,21%, Instagram 0,52%, reddit 0,52%. (Statcounter 2021)

There is a market research service that specializes in Vietnam digital marketing industries called Q&Me. The survey conducted by this organization has gone through 155 enterprises including 104 brands, 43 agencies and 8 publishers to research about the domestic marketing activities as well as relationship between brands and agencies.

Social media marketing is the main focus among all digital marketing methods in Vietnam. According to the survey, social media advertisement is popular regardless of the company size as 94% of the mid/large enterprises (more than 50 workers) and 79% of small enterprises (less than 50 workers) spend their budget on this marketing method. The detail of digital marketing in use is depicted in the below chart. (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research)

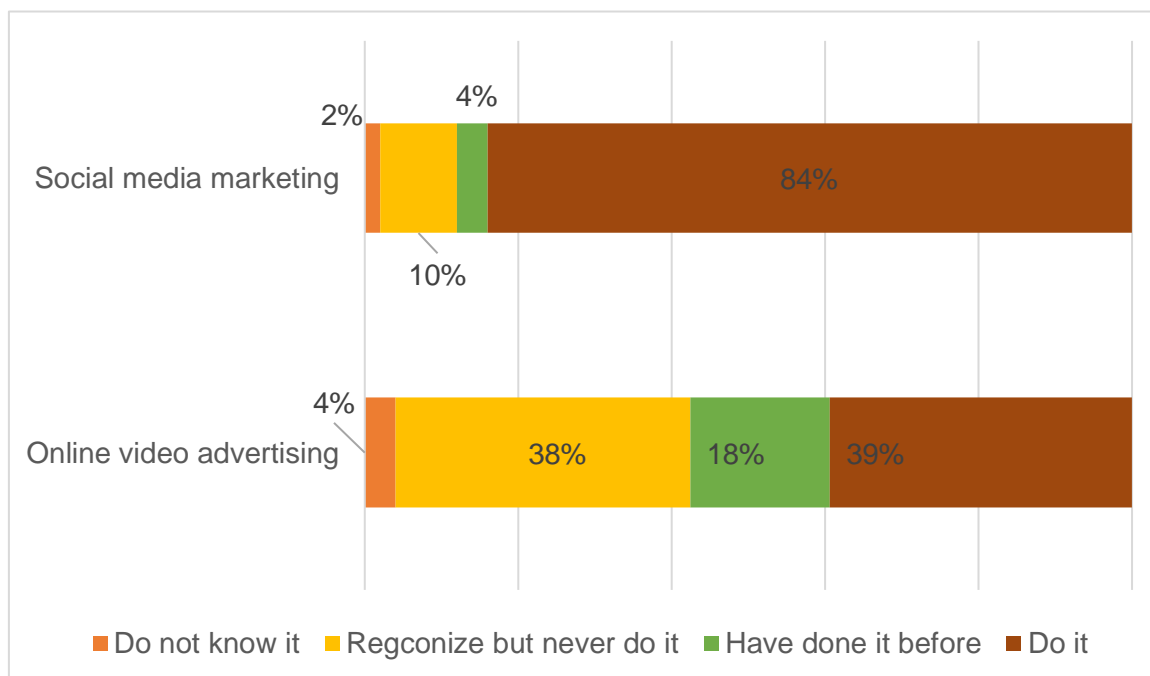


Figure 3 Digital marketing in use (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research)

The result of the research also indicates that Facebook is indeed the most popular platform that most of the enterprises have opened account on it. YouTube stands

second in the list. 99% of brands use Facebook for digital marketing purpose, the number for YouTube is 72%. ((Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

Facebook is also the priority choice when it comes to branding and promoting marketing campaigns in Vietnam, as 85% of all the respondents admit to use this platform for branding. 86% of big and middle enterprises in Vietnam use Facebook to promote their marketing projects. (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

87% brands have run Facebook ads at least once for the last 12 months before the survey date with the purpose to increase the number of business inquiries such as email and information request, or to increase the social popularity presented by the number of likes and followers. The success of social ads is unofficially considered as a measurement method for digital marketing performance nowadays in Vietnam. (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)



Figure 4 Facebook operation objective (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

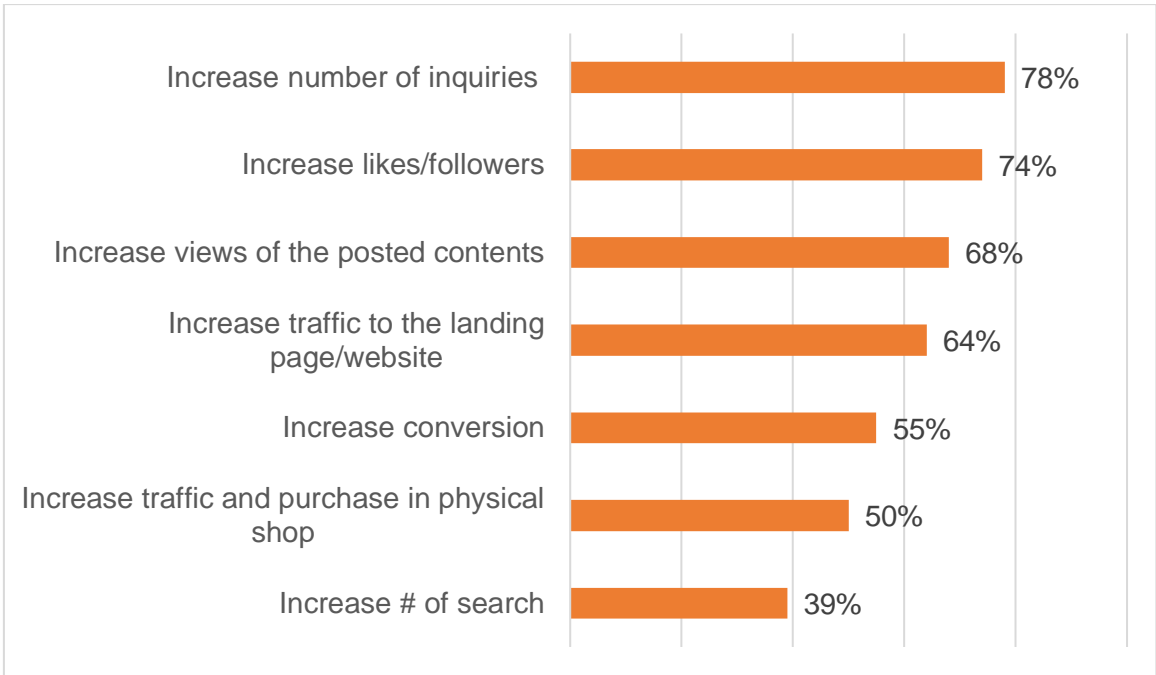


Figure 5 Facebook ad objectives (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

Online video is one of the most outstanding marketing activities in Vietnam as 85% of all the bands admits to use it. YouTube and Facebook are the two most popular platforms to host this type of marketing activity. Even though YouTube is widely known as the most popular video streaming tool, Facebook ads is still more in favour of Vietnamese market to promote advertisement. (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

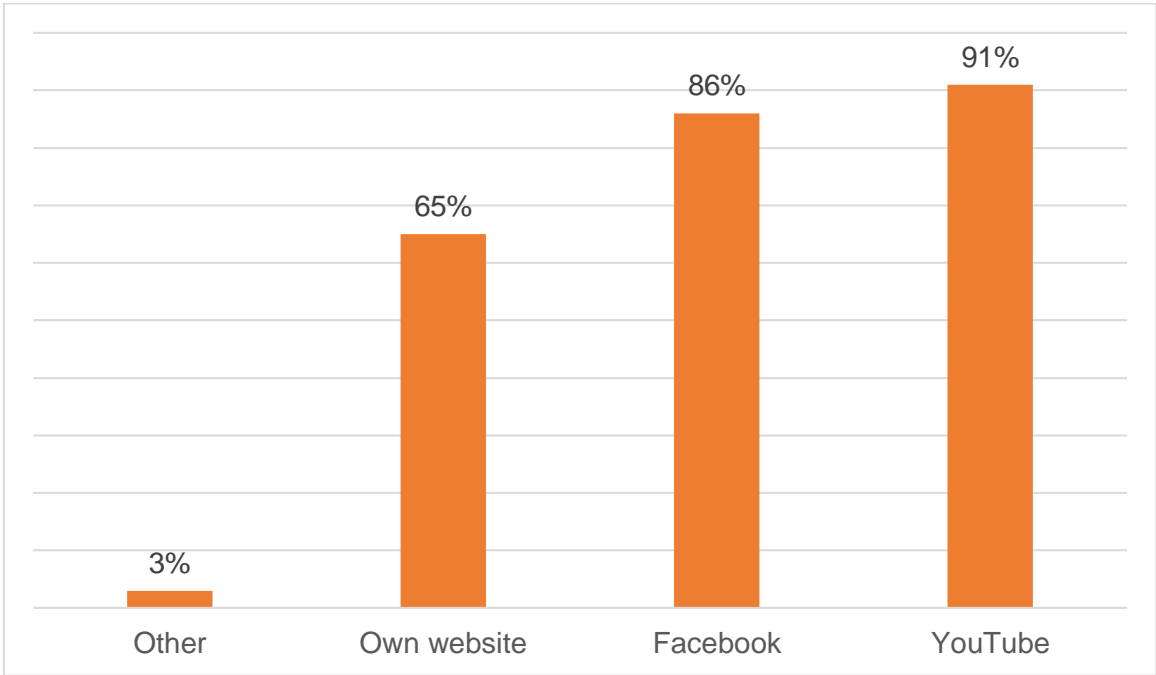


Figure 6 Platforms used for online video marketing (Q&Me Vietnam Marketing Research, 2017)

3.2 Social media in Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort

The InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort is the 1000th IHG (InterContinental Hotels Group) hotel to open in the Europe, Middle East, Asia, and Africa (EMEA) area, and the newest addition to the InterContinental Hotels & Resorts brand in Vietnam. It's on the beautiful Phu Quoc Island, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve off Vietnam's southwest coast. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)



Figure 7 Breath-taking sunset (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

One of the resort's most appealing qualities is its location on Long Beach, the hub of the tourist island and one of Vietnam's most beautiful white-sand beaches with spectacular sunset views. It's within a 15-minute drive from Phu Quoc International Airport and 20 minutes from Duong Dong's cultural attractions: Bai Truong, Duong To Ward, Kien Giang: Phu Quoc, Vietnam. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)



Figure 8 Magnificent view (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

The Grand Ballroom, Junior Ballroom, conference rooms, board rooms, and the island's lone theatre are among the resort's 2,300 sqm of outstanding interior event spaces. There are also several outdoor settings, such as poolside and the beach. The resort's skilled events staff can plan custom-themed events and ensure that everything runs smoothly from start to finish. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

On Vietnam's most exquisite tropical island, the InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort provides 459 magnificent rooms, condos, suites, and villas. Explore our intriguing beachside eateries, relax with a soothing HARNN Heritage Spa treatment, or take in a breathtaking ocean sunset from the island's tallest sky bar. The premium resort flawlessly blends sophistication with Vietnamese emotional appeal, making it ideal for groups or individuals, as well as business and leisure guests. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort is thoughtfully designed for families, couples, and individuals, as well as leisure travelers and meeting delegates, and features an exclusive beachfront, six bars and restaurants, 459 luxuriously appointed rooms, suites, and villas, as well as state-of-the-art meeting facilities, all while seamlessly combining the sophisticated and cosmopolitan essence of the InterContinental heritage with the heartfelt rustic charm of the resort's surrounding local area and culture. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

Exclusive access to a quiet length of Long Beach is available to resort guests, making it the ideal spot for swimming, sunbathing, and watching ocean sunsets. The huge bathtubs, walk-in rain showers, floor-to-ceiling windows, and huge balconies in each of the beautiful rooms, suites, and villas guarantee a lavish and welcoming setting for the ultimate retreat in luxury and relaxation. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

The InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort provides a tantalizing selection of contemporary and elegant dining options, including INK 360, Phu Quoc's tallest bar, which has spectacular panoramic ocean and mountain views. The bar, designed by award-winning Australian designer Ashley Sutton, is the ideal spot for a welcome toast or celebratory drinks, with guests sipping unique cocktails and munching on tapas-style seafood, caviar, and oysters while watching the sunset. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

Lava, a fine-dining seafood and speciality imported meats restaurant, uses the freshest product grilled over charcoal grills and lava stone, as well as a variety of locally produced fragrant peppers such as black, white, red, and Tay Giang Sora & Umi specializes on genuine Japanese and Vietnamese food, featuring robatayaki, teppanyaki, and sushi among the restaurant's many live cooking stations. Ombra delivers fresh juices and healthful nibbles alongside home-made Italian food and gelato by the pool. Comfort food, tapas, barbeque, and grilled delicacies such as the iconic lobster roll are served on the beachfront restaurant Sea Shack, while beers and ciders are provided in the Library section, which is loaded with books about cuisine, drinks, Vietnamese culture, art, interior design, and travel. The Mercado sells coffee, tea, and pastries, as well as themed picnic hampers filled with Vietnamese delicacies, Mediterranean and Healthy. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

The award-winning HARNN Heritage Spa, created by Vietnamese architect Vo Trong Nghia and influenced by traditional Asian medicine and naturopathy, offers guests relaxing spa treatments. The resort offers holistic and adventurous activities such as Yoga, Pilates, and water sports, as well as bespoke cultural experiences such as local produce tours to the island's renowned pepper and pearl farms, hiking

in nature, and night markets, in addition to full-body wellness and relaxation treatments. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort is an entertainment heaven for kids, with fascinating activities and considerate care geared for younger VIPs. Planet Trekkers, a 250-square-foot children's club, organizes a variety of recreational activities and enlightening excursions to delight and extend the horizons of children of all ages. The children's club provides an assortment of activities, including children's yoga, arts and crafts, beach volleyball, and magic courses, in a secure and engaging environment where parents can feel comfortable leaving their children in the hands of the well-trained staff, all of whom are qualified instructors. The resort also has a special Kids Can Cook culinary school, where younger visitors can learn to prepare their favorite meals with the help of the resort's expert chefs. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

The resort's Conference Centre has approximately 2,000 square meters of indoor event space and is conveniently positioned inside the main resort complex. The 870 sqm Grand Ballroom can accommodate banquets for up to 600 people, a purpose-built theater can accommodate 130 delegates, and various break out rooms all with cutting-edge audio-visual technology. The Conference Centre has a lot of pre-function area for breaks, exhibits, and trade shows, and the al fresco Beachfront Garden is perfect for banquets in lovely natural settings. Furthermore, InterContinental's recruited and qualified staff team can speak German, English, French, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, and Chinese in order to provide a smooth service to foreign tourists. (Intercontinental Hotel Group, 2019)

In addition to advanced off-line channel service, InterContinental also impulses the development of social media. All the channels from professional LinkedIn to general social media, for example, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, even Weibo are taken advantage of and accomplished. With appropriate campaign and quality content, fanpages on the resort's social media have considerable organic interaction numbers (like, follow, subscribe, etc.)

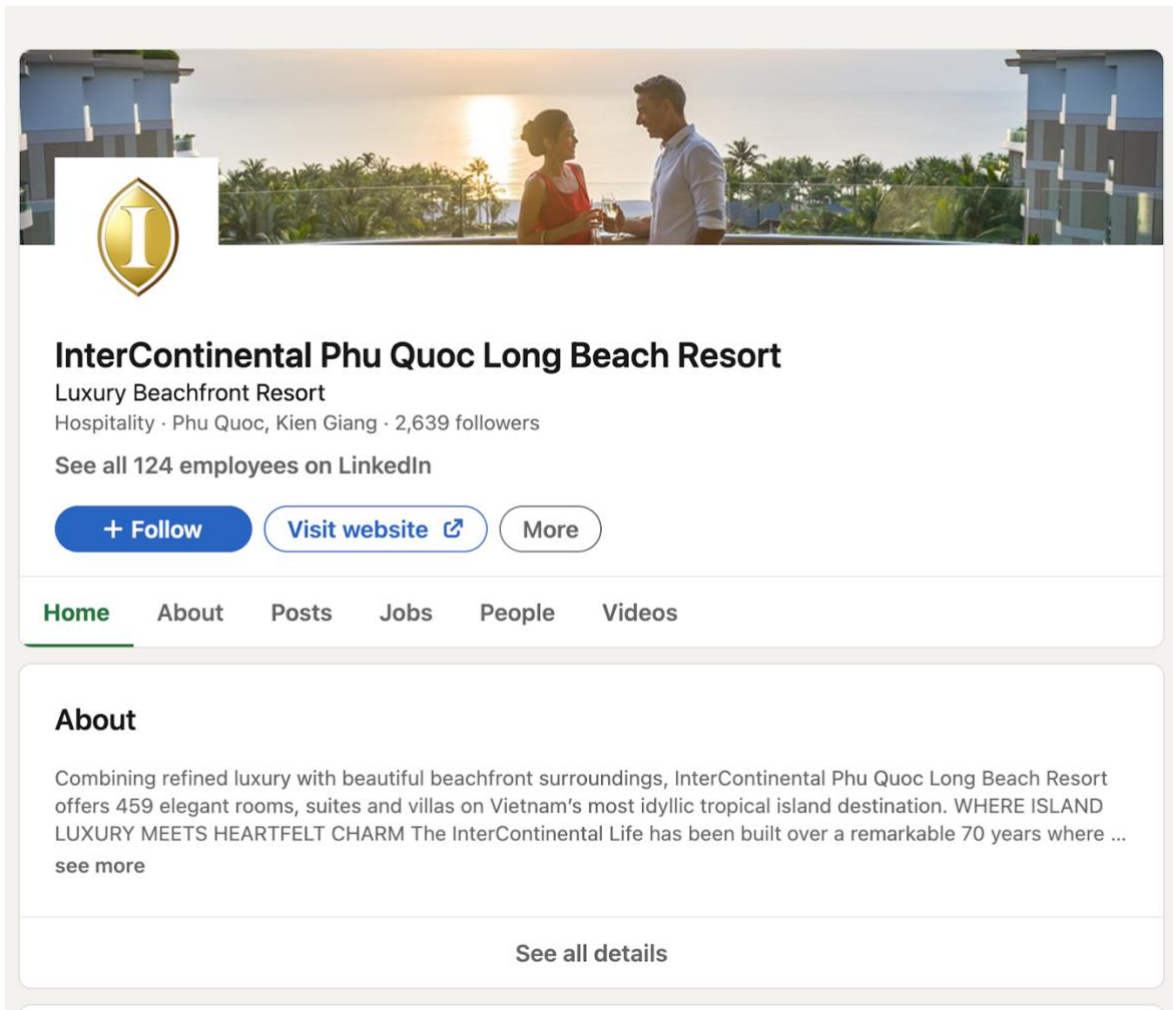


Figure 9 Intercontinental Phu Quoc on LinkedIn

At the first look on LinkedIn, it is easy to be seen that InterContinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort reaches 2639 followers - a leading number in comparison to all the rest of Phu Quoc resort's page. All the content is updated professionally about resort business events as well as holiday wishes to followers.

The posts are written in English for the international community; however in Vietnam holidays such as Vietnamese women's day, wishes written in Vietnamese are prioritized on top with English below. Through such a subtle activity, it can explain the reason why each LinkedIn post always gets 20-100 likes regularly.

Due to the fact that Facebook is the most popular social media used in Vietnam, InterContinental Phu Quoc made the decision to choose the Facebook fanpage as the main promotion channel for Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort.

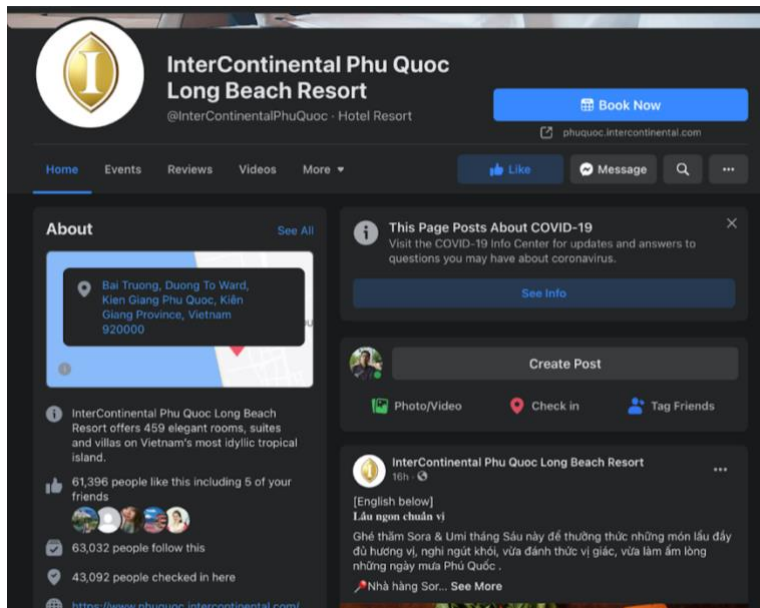


Figure 10 Intercontinental Phu Quoc on Facebook

The fanpage has got around 61k likes and 63k followers. As mentioned above, Facebook fanpage is for Vietnamese community so all the content is posted in Vietnamese with English content below. Every single post is polished detailedly to convey the luxury, convenience, and greatness of Long Beach resort via magnificent image, romantic story and tasteful food. Besides, the information about offers and reservation links are posted promptly.

The other social media channels also are invested such as YouTube and Instagram. YouTube has 230 subscribers, however many videos with more than 10k views. Even though YouTube is not the main channel, the video is still made with high quality of resolution and content with participation of Vietnamese celebrities. Instagram here plays a role as a beautiful album collection from facebook posts with 433 photo posts which draw a total of 15k followers.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research method

The thesis is made with the purpose to investigate the level of social media integration of the guests from a certain resort in Vietnam. The research method chosen to process is quantitative research. The analysis of the research will be based on the data collected presented in charts as well as broken down using IBM SPSS Statistics.

4.2 Implementation

The form of data collection in this case is a questionnaire distributed under paper forms for all the guests staying in the hotel. The survey is longitudinal within a period of a month. This form of data collection together with the time length is chosen in regards of costs, data availability and convenience.

The author has collected 98 eligible responses from all the participants and proceed to analysis.

4.3 Limitation

Non-response bias and possibly other biases might be found in regards of the data collected. Hence, the sample used to analyse might not be presentative of the whole population. The limitation of the questionnaire might result from limited number of responses.

5 Quantitative analysis

5.1 The demographics of study sample

There were more than 100 survey forms giving out to all the guests coming to the case hotel between January 1st 2020 and January 31st 2020. However, only 98 eligible forms got chosen to be processed in the quantitative analysis.

The demographics of the study sample is depicted as the below table.

Criteria	Types	Amount	%
Gender	Female	63	64,3%
	Male	32	35,7%
Age groups	18-25	11	11,2%
	26-34	19	19,4%
	35-55	39	39,8%
	55<	29	29,6%
Nationality	Europe	27	27,5%
	- British	7	7,1%
	- German	8	8,2%
	- French	7	7,1%
	- Spanish	3	3,1%
	- Russian	2	2%
	Australia	10	10,2%
	- Australian	8	8,2%
	- New Zealand	2	2%
	Asia	25	25,5%
- Thailand	6	6,1%	

	- Japanese	3	3,1%
	- Korean	4	4,1%
	- Chinese	12	12,2%
	America	15	15,3%
	- USA	10	10,2%
	- Canadian	5	5,1%
	Vietnamese	21	21,5%
Occupation	Businessmen	35	35,7%
	Professor/Teacher	11	11,2%
	Engineer/Doctor	8	8,2%
	Officer	29	29,6%
	Freelancer	10	10,2%
	Retired	5	5,1%
Travelling purpose	Leisure	57	58,2%
	Visiting relatives	9	9,2%
	Business trip	25	25,5%
	Other	7	7,1%
Resort booking method	Tour package	45	45,9%
	Personal Arrangement	53	54,1%
Frequency of visits	1 st time	75	76,5%
	2 nd time	20	20,4%
	From 3 rd time	5	5,1%

Figure 11 The demographics of study sample

The table indicates that there are 63 female guests, accounting for 64,3% of the total sample. The number of male guests is 32, making up 35,7% as the rest visitors. There is evidently a female dominance considering the gender criteria. The gender differences is possibly explainable by the fact that Intercontinental Phu Quoc is characterised as a leisure destination in excess of spa and body nurturing services.

The main age group of the samples is 35-45, comprised of 52,5% of the whole sample. The second most popular age group is 26-34, followed by 55< and 18-25. The popular age groups denote the fact that International Phu Quoc resort is portrayed as a luxury accommodation, targeting the customer segments with considerably higher income compared to average customer segment.

International Phu Quoc Resort welcomes guests over the globe, as the nationalities of the sample units spread through all the continents quite evenly. Europeans and Asians each account for 27,5% and 25,5% out of all visitors and become the most popular customer segment of the hotel. American ranks fourth at 15,3%, followed by Australian at 10,2%. Vietnamese alone take up 21,5% of all the visitors with 21 visits within survey month.

The most popular occupation of all the sample units is businessman and business women, making up 35,7%. The second is officer group, accounting for 29,6%. The other occupations share the rest of the sample pool with quite even distribution. Retired guests are the smallest group that visit the resort within the survey time frame.

Most visits recorded are for leisure purpose, accounting for 58,2% of the whole survey answers. Another significant reason of the resort visits is business trip, making up 25,5%. The other popular reason is visiting relatives. There are two ways to book the accommodation in Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort, personal arrangement and tour company package. Both options are utilized approximately equally according to the survey answers.

In regard of the survey results, the resort guests are mainly first-time visitors, taking up 76,5% of the survey answers. 20,4% of the survey units say that this is their second visit and only 5,1% admit that they are loyal customers with more than three visits. The frequency of guest visits indicates that International Phu Quoc Resort is still considered as a new destination for the guests to explore; therefore, the demand

of quality and service must be emphasized to leave the guest with good impression and build foundation for the development of international reputation.

5.2 Customer approaching method

When participating in the survey, all the guests must answer the question asking how they get to know about the resort. As International Phu Quoc resort is a newly established complex, it is important for the resort management to acknowledge what marketing method and channel are most effective so that the upcoming marketing plan can be executed more sufficiently applying practical insights. The table below explicitly demonstrates the sources of information that awaken the guest awareness about the resort existence.

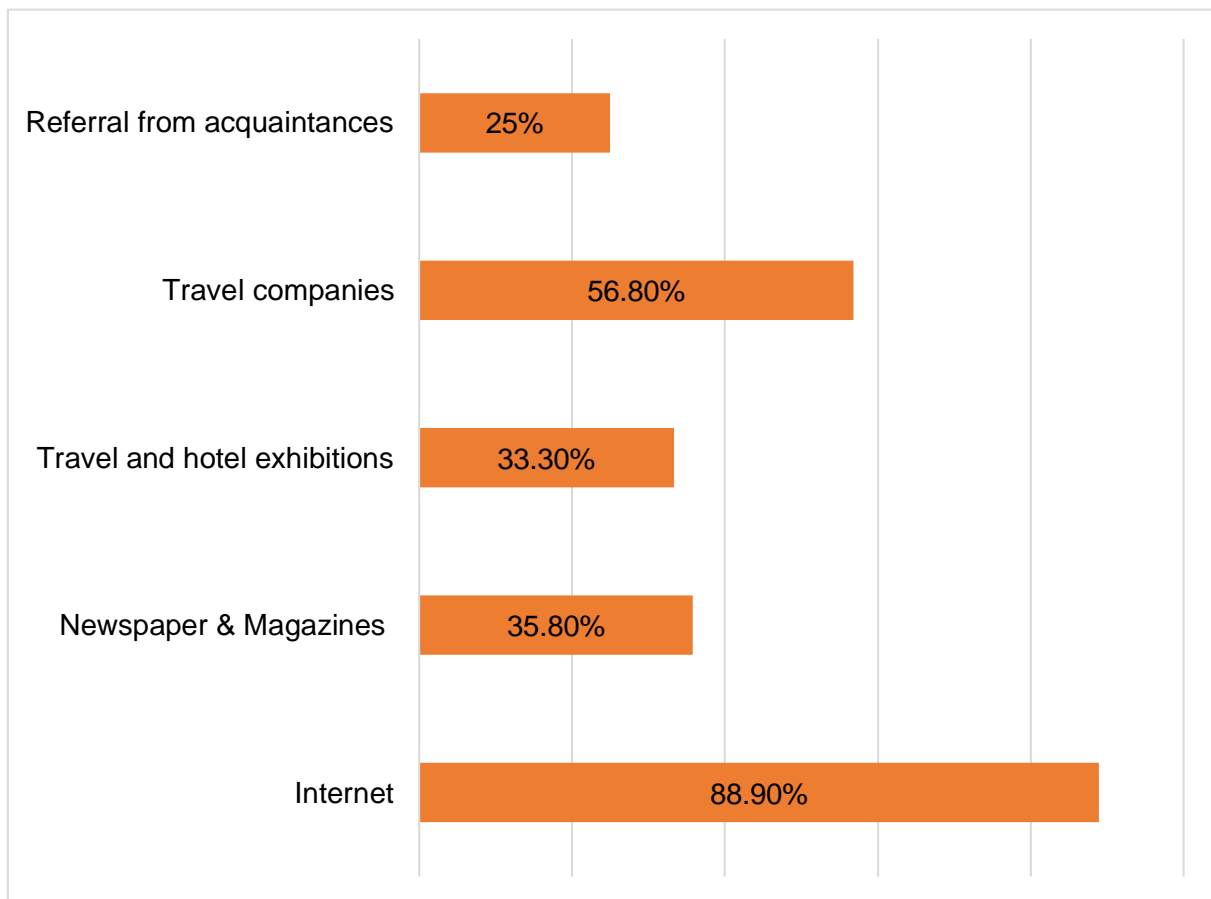


Figure 12 Source of guest awareness

The column chart portrayed that Internet is the majority source leading the guests to know about the existence of the resort in the first place with 89,9% of all answers. Internet option consists of all the online marketing activities promoting for the resort

such as online advertisement, posts on social media channels and ads on booking sites.

Besides, a considerable proportion of the guests participating in the survey also answer that they know about the resort through travel companies. This fact indicates that even though there is a large number of guests eventually decide to travel without the travel company, they still come to the organized tour to ask about the information needed for referral before making the decision. The importance of business-to-business relationship is proved to be vastly beneficial in the travel industry through just this small survey result.

Other sources of information reach a rather humbler number of guests compared to the two above sources. Referral from acquaintances only helps 25% of all the guests to know about the resort, which can be explained because Phu Quoc Intercontinental Resort is still considered as a new destination with lesser visited guests compared to its competitors. Newspaper and magazines reach 35,8% while travel and hotel exhibitions is at 33,5%, a standard number for these traditional marketing methods in this world of moving innovations.

After knowing about Phu Quoc Intercontinental Resort as a choice of accommodation during the travel period, now the guests will start research about the hotel. The next table will show what methods the guests have used to conduct deeper information about their upcoming accommodation.

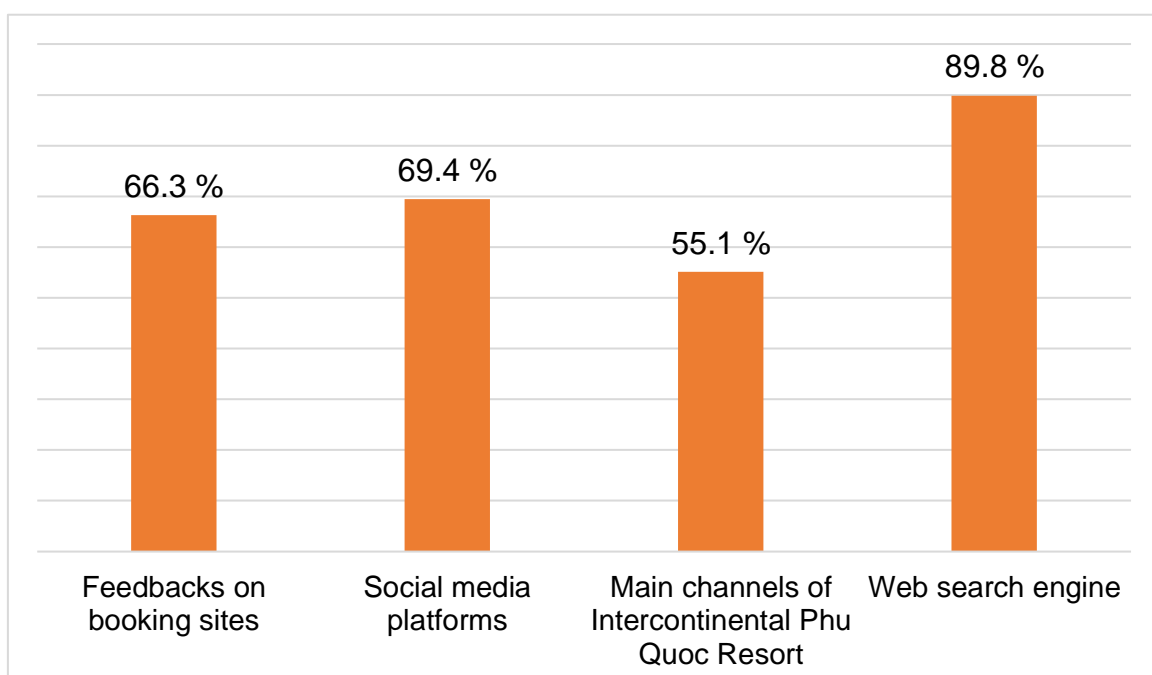


Figure 13 Source of guests' research

The chart reveals that the guests mainly use web search engines such as Google, Bing, Duckduckgo and Yahoo!, accounting for 89,8% of all the results. 66,3% of the participants say that they have read through the feedbacks on some popular booking sites to have a general image of the resort before deciding to make the purchase. 55,1% admit that they have been careful enough to actually visit the official channels of the resort for undistorted information. Social media platforms of the resort have received visits from 69,4% of the respondents. The guests noted that they checked the Facebook and Instagram page of the resort to evaluate the reliability of the resort itself by skimming through the number of likes, shares as well as comments on the recent posts.

5.3 Analysis of social media usage

As the title of this thesis, social media is the focus of the whole thesis. Social media has been statically proven to be an extremely effective tool to actively interact with the customers. Here are the statistic numbers of most popular social media platforms that the guests have been using.

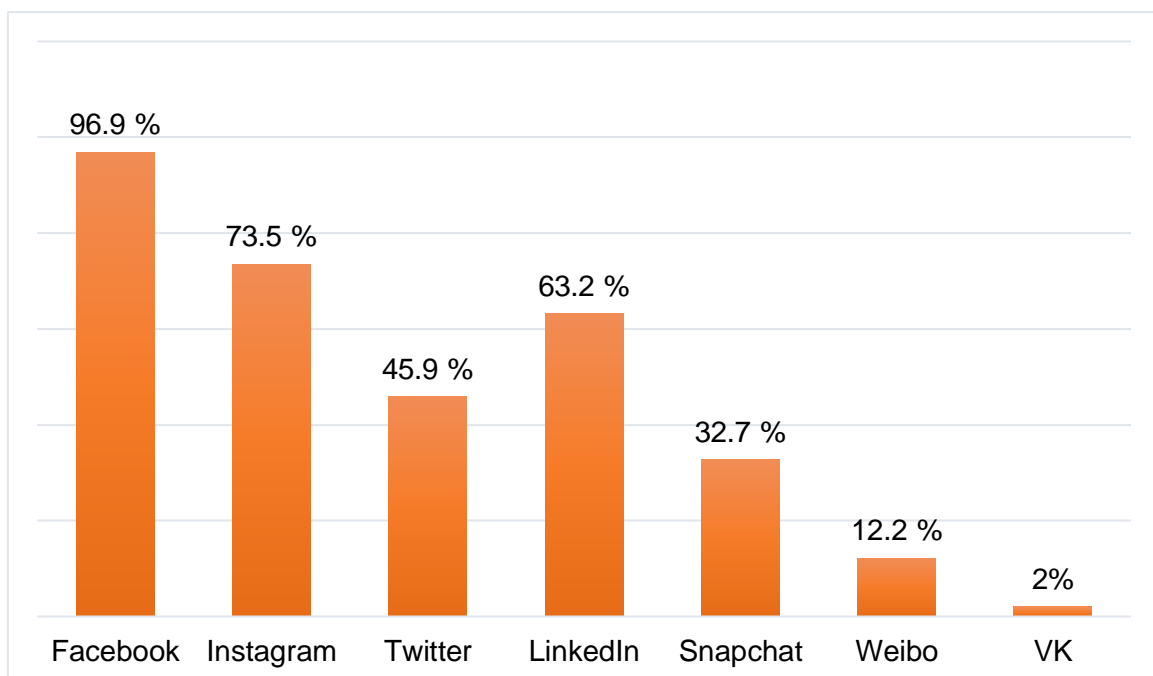


Figure 14 The popular social media platforms used by the guests

Facebook apparently wins the first place in regards of the most popular social media platform used by the guests by the margin of 96,9%. Instagram, a smaller branch of Facebook, comes at second with 73,5%. LinkedIn is the third most used platform with 63,2% while Twitter, a platform widely popular in the America, accounts for 45,9%. The rising star in the social media platform business Snapchat has been registered by 32,7% of all the respondents. Weibo and VK, though only make up relatively 12,2% and 2% of the results, are also very noticeable because all Chinese and Russian guests in the survey have reported opening personal accounts on these platforms.

Besides, the frequency of social media use also reflects the level of interest the guests possess towards their digital identity. If the guests frequently check their social media pages, they are more likely to access and update new content from the followed brands.

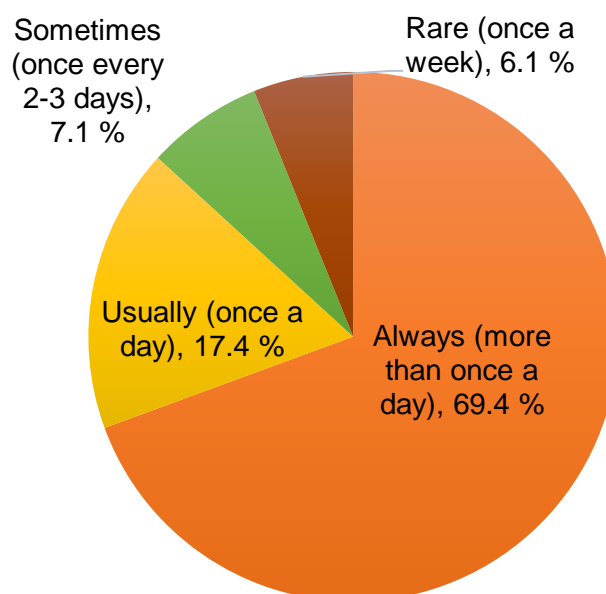


Figure 15 Frequency of social media check-up

The pie chart reveals that the majority of the guests open their social media more than once a day with 69,4%. 17,4% admits that they check their platforms once a day, while only 7,1% say they update their newsfeeds once every few days and 6,1% claim that they rarely care what the social media is hyping about with the frequency of once every week. The result of this question indicates the high level of interest the customers have towards their social media activities. This fact opens up

a good opportunity for Phu Quoc Intercontinental Resorts to promote active advertisement campaigns through these social media platforms.

The quality of social media contacts is the key element to evaluate the reliability and authenticity of shared information. This quality can be evaluated through the number of friends online and the relationship with those friends offline.

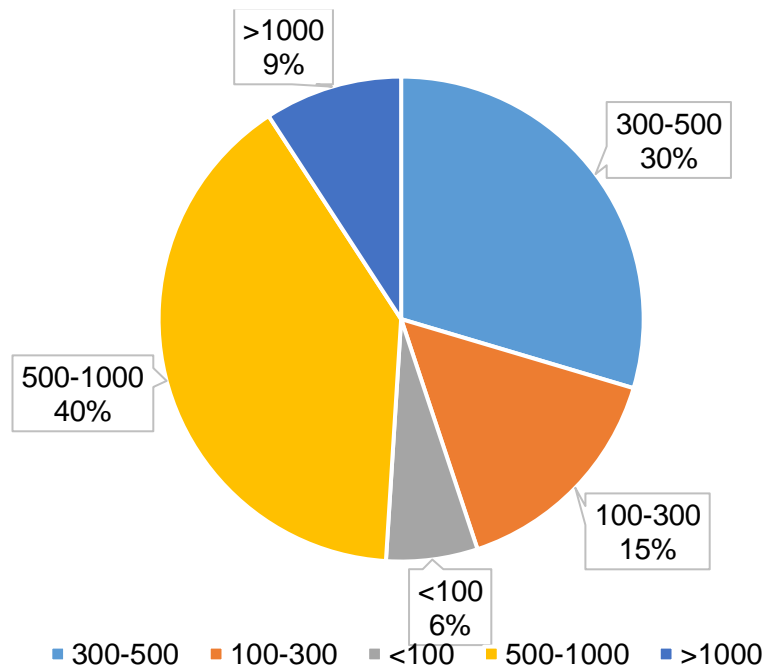


Figure 16 Number of friends on guests' social media profiles

The chart reveals that most of the guests have an adequate number of friends online. 30% of the respondents have from 500 to 1000 friends online, while 30% of them have from 300 to 500 friends. 9% of the guests have more than 1000 friends online. In certain social platforms, such as Facebook, the maximum number of friends allowed in one account can be up to 5000. This huge number of social contacts enable a highly potential scalability of information share and spread if optimized successfully with strategic marketing plan.

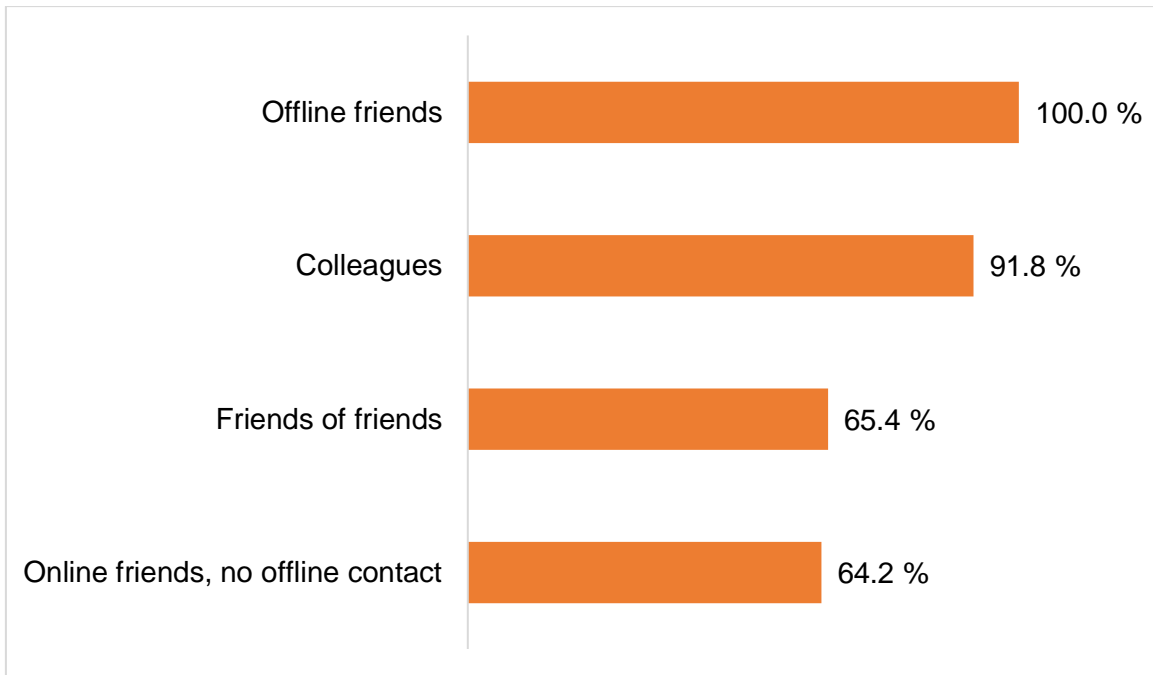


Figure 17 Friend categories on social media

According to the chart, 100% of the survey respondents answer that they add their offline friends to the social media platforms that they are using. Colleagues are also part of the online contacts with 91,8% of the guests admit to do so. 65,4% people also make friends of their own friends an added contact on these social platforms. Up to 64,2% of people reveal that they accept friend requests from their online friends without the necessity of having met these people in real life.

It is safe to conclude from the chart that most of the people still have online contacts originated from offline acquaintances. This is a vital note to social media marketing, as the shared information from a known source is usually more reliable than from a complete stranger online.

5.4 Guests' interests towards brands

Before apply social media as a marketing tool to promote the brand and target marketing campaigns to the customers, it is important to find out what the customers care when they follow of such brands on social media. In other word, it is a critical task to know the purpose of the guests when they agree to receive information from a brand.

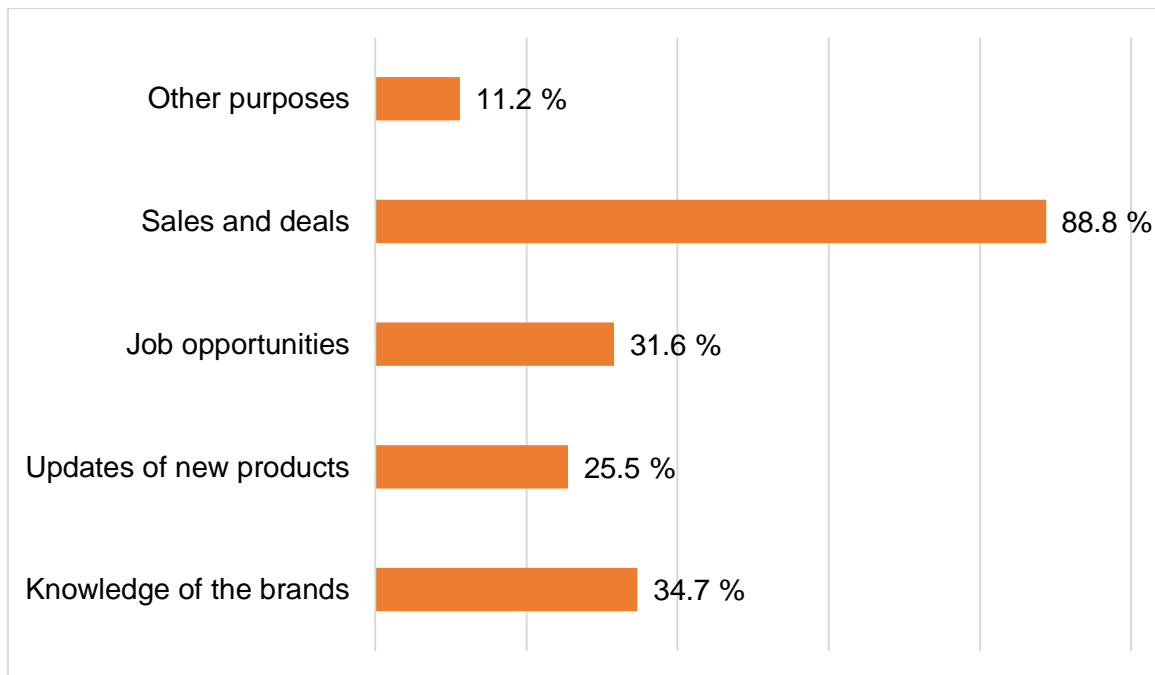


Figure 18 Guests' interests towards brands

The chart 8 lets us know that the majority of the guests are interested in sales and deals when they follow the fan pages or official sites. The other options attracting guests' attention are also noticeable such as job opportunities and updates of new products. It is good news that up to 34,7% of the guests are prone to know more about the brand when they follow the social media sites of the brand. Therefore, it can be seen that there is a need from the customer's side to get to know the brand more thoroughly, especially updates about sale campaigns and deals.

The next chart will describe the guests' evaluation of specific contents posted on the brand's social media sites using SPSS program.

Content	Grade (%)					Mean	Sig.
	1	2	3	4	5		
Update on local political news	13	30,4	26,1	18,8	11,6	2,86	1,22
Local travel tips	2,9	7,2	17,4	40,6	31,9	3,91	1,02
General information about the resort	7,1	18,6	22,9	35,7	15,7	3,34	1,12

Update on resort services	0	0	17,4	47,8	34,8	4,17	0,71
Resort pictures and videos	4,3	18,8	34,8	29,0	13,0	3,28	1,06
Resort sales and deals	0	0	11,6	36,2	52,2	4,41	0,69

Figure 19 Guests' evaluation of the content categories

The respondents give the grade in table 2 based on the level of interests toward specific content categories with 1 being the lowest interest and 5 being the highest. The result table point out that update on local political news is not really needed on the social media sites, as up to 43,4% people find the news irrelevant and 26,1% is neutral whether or not this kind of news is updated. That the mean of is content category is at a low level of 2,86 and the standard deviation is 1,22 statically prove that the other values are not too far from the mean.

The local travel tips, on the other hand, has received overwhelmingly interest from the respondents. Up to 72,5% guests reveal that they would pay more attention to this content if encountering on social media newsfeed. In this specific content, the author has run an Independent Samples test to examine the difference between international guests and Vietnamese guests when assessing this question.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	f	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	,425	,517	-2,214	67	,030
Equal variances not assumed			-3,664	2,590	,045

Figure 20 Independent Sample test of the content local travel tips

In table 3, Sig. value of Levene's Test is 0,517, which means that the Equality of Variances between local guests and international guests is different. Therefore, t value in Equal variances not assumed is taken into consideration. Sig. (2-tailed) in t-test for Equality of Means is still smaller than observed significance level, $\text{Sig.} \leq \alpha$ ($0,045 < 0,1$). This result signifies that there is a statical difference between the mean value of these two groups of guests. As the mean value of international guest is 3,97 and that of local guests is 2,67, it is safe to conclude that international guests are more likely to value given local travel tips than local guests will be.

According to table 2, general information about the resort is also a content that attracts attention from the respondents. There are two ways to inform the guests about the resort: by word-detailed paragraph and by digital media material, in this case advertising images and videos. According to the survey answers, 51,4% of the respondents say that general information about the resort such as location, services, rooms and other facilities are necessary. Other 42% find the attached videos and images are helpful I visualizing the resort. The mean scores of these two methods are respectively 3,34 for word reviews and 3,24 for media material. The author will run a One Sample test to test if these two methods are statically proven to be above the mean value of the whole sample.

	Test value = 3		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Resort general information	2,462	68	,016
Resort images and videos	2,167	68	,034

Figure 21 One Sample test on information methods

Analysis of this test reveals that Sig. value of both methods are lower than the observed significance level 0,1 so it means that in general, the need of general information as well as images and videos are at above medium rate. These types of information are still considered necessary for the resort, but not at a critical level that attract a lot of attention from the guests.

Table 2 also points out that there are 2 types of contents that receive significantly higher level of interest from the guests. These are update on resort services (82,6%) and resort sales and deals (88,4%). The medium scores for these two contents are respectively 4,17 and 4,41; variances of which are also respectively 0,71 and 0,69. The statistic numbers specify that most of the scores given are around the average value. The One Sample test with test value = 4 results in the next table.

	Test value = 4		
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Update on resort services	2,046	68	,045
Resort sales and deals	4,886	68	,000

Figure 22 One Sample test on the most popular marketing contents

It can be concluded from the table that Sig. value of both contents are lower than the observed significance level 0,1; therefore these 2 contents are given significantly higher score compared to the other contents mentioned in Table 2.

6 Conclusion

Social media platform is inarguably an inevitable part in the modern digital marketing world. That social media consists of multiple networks with billions of active users and flash news being on the run 24/7 make it a huge part of the job that any marketer must learn and manifest for better marketing performance. The development of social media is unstoppable along with the ever need of humanity to connect and interact with each other, leading us to keep updated with the newest trends and catch up the hottest news.

In Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort case, the survey shows that the majority of the guests are from 26 to 55 years old, of which the age group 35-55 accounts for 39,8% of the total survey. This age group happens to be the most active age group on social media platforms. Hence, the marketing potential targeting this customer segment is arguably extremely promising using social media advertisement.

Moreover, up to 72,5% of the guests confess that they are willing to post their personal opinions on their profile wall, 97,3% support the idea that Intercontinental Phu Quoc resort should have its official profile on multiple social media channels. These statistic numbers are an ultimately positive fact that the resort should focus on social media as a crucial and official marketing channel.

There are so many social network channels nowadays that it is difficult to make effort to polish the profile on all of them. Therefore, it is a critical decision to pick up the right platforms and target as many potential guests as possible.

As aforementioned on previous parts of the thesis, Facebook is the most active social platform in Vietnam as well as in the world, so definitely a marketing profile on there. Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter also respectively rank highly in the survey as most used networks. For each social media platform, the main target might diverse. For instance, Facebook aims at general audience as Facebook can reach widespread global population due to its enormous popularity.

Intercontinental Phu Quoc resort can based on the characteristics of the marketing message and the target customer segment to distribute the marketing budget and build a modified marketing campaign on different channels. For the most active channel - Facebook, in the author's opinion, the marketing team has been working

professionally and effectively by bilingual posts in multi content types – images, live images, brief paragraphs, and videos, frequently every 2 or 3 days. As a result, the social media interacting rate of the posts are really positive, from 20 to 80 likes and a few comments per every advertising posts. The author’s suggestion for the marketing in this case of Facebook is that even though the interacting rate is quite good in this COVID situation, the virality still have rooms for improvement by creating more interacting polls and daily Facebook stories. By actually involving themselves in the resort activities, the guests can keep updated with the newest campaigns and offers. A sense of belongingness can also be developed by this continuous and frequent interaction purposely created between the guests and the resort.

After deciding on the social media channels, it is time to identify the content categories. As unsimilar to website as it is, social media requires different types of social media content. Social media materials should be modified so as to be short yet intriguing, being as much as an attention grabber as possible. Being satisfying the mentioned condition and applying the result from the survey above, there are a few useful insights that the resort can utilize in practical cases.

Though more valued by international guests than local guests. local travel tips are still rated as one of the most welcomed contents on the social media voted. The tips can range from local food specialties and locations, the most convenient transport methods to some common local phrases for basic communication, table etiquettes, the local taboos and cultural beliefs. These tips may seem to be obvious for locals and Vietnamese in general, but can be extremely helpful for foreigners in order to have a basic introduction of the region or to simply to have a smooth vacation without any unnecessary misunderstanding during the stay. Moreover, by consistently posting about the region, the resort can elegantly ignite the curiosity and the urge of the guest to explore more about not only the place as a vacation destination but also the resort itself due to repetitive interaction.

According to the collected answers, the guests are most interested in sales and deals offered by the resort. Beside ordinary sales offered annually during vacations and holidays, the author recommends special deals targeting only at social media users to encourage better interactivity and wider virality for the social media profile.

In these deals, Intercontinental Phu Quoc resort can conveniently introduce about its complimentary as well as paid side services such as wedding packages, spa treatment, sightseeing tour, etc. These offers can come along with some simple yet extremely marketing-wise useful requirements being online check-in, likes, shares or honest reviews posted on Facebook or Google review. As the matter of fact, this marketing content is not necessarily posted as frequently as daily quest, but rather at a weekly or monthly basis depending on the marketing budget.

Beside the chosen marketing contents, the resort can benefit from an extremely effective marketing method aforementioned in the theoretical part called SOSTAC. This marketing method should cover all dimensions of a marketing plan if followed completely and thoroughly.

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Appendix. Questionnaire form

Social media use survey

Hello,

I am Trang Nguyen, a student from LAB University of Applied Sciences. I am working with Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort to figure out a more customer-oriented social marketing approach for the resort. I hope that you can help us with your personal insights about how social media is used nowadays by filling out this questionnaire below.

The questionnaire should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. All responses will be handled anonymously and confidently so that no response shall be identified personally from the published result. Please give your response at your latest convenience by 31 January 2020.

It would mean a lot to me and the resort if you can participate in this research. Please contact me at bui.nguyen@student.lab.fi should you have any question concerning the questionnaire.

Thank you!

Yours truly,

Trang Nguyen

A. Personal Information

1. Nationality:	2. Gender: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male• Female	3. Age: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18-25• 26-34• 35-55• >55
4. Resort booking method: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tour package• Personal arrangement	5. Occupation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Businessman• Professor/Teacher• Engineer/Doctor• Officer• Freelancer• Retired	6. Travelling purpose: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leisure• Visiting relatives• Business trip• Other

B. Main content

1. How many times have you visited Intercontinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort?

- First time
- Second time
- More than third times

2. How did you get information about Intercontinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort? (you can choose more than one answer)

- Internet
- News & Magazines
- Travel and hotel exhibitions
- Travel companies

- Recommendations from acquaintances
- Other, please specify

3. If you get information about the Intercontinental Phu Quoc Long Beach Resort on the Internet, which source do you usually use to search for information? (you can choose more than one answer)

- Travel forums
- The feedback of other customers in the travel booking sites (Agoda, TripAdvisor, Booking, etc.)
- Social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.)
- Main channels of Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort
- Web search engine

4. Are you using any social network channel?

- Yes
- No (please skip to the end of the questionnaire)

5. Please select all social networks from which you have created a personal profile: (you can choose more than one answer)

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Snapchat
- Weibo
- VK

6. How many friends do you have on your primary social network?

- Less than 100
- 100-300

- 300-500
- 500-1000
- >1000

7. How often do you spend time on your social networks?

- Always (more than once a day)
- Usually (once a day)
- Sometimes (once every 2-3 days)
- Rarely (once a week)

8. What category does your friend list belong to? ((you can choose more than one answer)

- Offline friends
- Colleagues
- Friends of friends
- Online friends, no offline contact

9. What is the motivation that you follow a certain brand on social media platform?

- Sales and deals
- Job opportunities
- Update of new products
- Knowledge of the brand
- Other purpose, please specify

10. How would you evaluate the level of necessity of the content categories updated on the main social media platforms of Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort based on your own interest with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest rate?

Content categories	Evaluation				
	1	2	3	4	5

Update on local political news					
Local travel tips					
General information about the resort					
Update on resort services					
Resort pictures and videos					
Resort sales and deals					

11. Would you share your opinion about Intercontinental Phu Quoc Resort on your social media platforms?

- Yes
- No

The survey ends here. Thank you very much for your participation and have a great vacation!