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## An Investigation of the Impact of the Audience's Perceptions of Social Media Quality Interaction on Purchasing Decision-Making: the Case of JW Marriott Lima in Peru

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### **Abstract**

Social media platforms have become a space where businesses communicate directly with their customers and display their products or services. Regarding the hospitality industry, hotels have found throughout the recent years that these networks may attract and increase the amount of guests while communicating and interacting with them. Thus, the aim of this research is to explore the impact the quality of service in the social media platform interaction has on customer's decision-making when choosing the JW Marriott in Lima, Peru. When social media impact in hotels reputations has been studied there is a gap at the moment of investigating if a provided high quality interaction in social media is given, the decision-making process of a potential guest will result favourable. Academic articles, social media profiles, and books will be reviewed in order to answer the postulated aim. An inductive and qualitative approach will be used to analyse experiences and perceptions from 20 Peruvian followers of JW Marriott Lima Instagram and Facebook accounts respectively (10 female, 10 male) from 30-35 years old, who have not booked rooms before. Video Call interviews will be conducted and from the marketing department documents with engagement statistics will be revised for the data collection. The results propose that social media has an effective impact within the purchasing decision-making process when the potential customer needs information about the hotel, nonetheless not necessarily about hotel rooms. Also, JW Marriott has a well developed engagement strategy since effective communication and fast response is often provided. Taking everything into account, it is advised by the author that JW Marriot must keep improving its interaction rate and focusing on accommodation advertisements. Also, a quantitative approach might bring concrete results following the customer journey started in social media platforms with the purpose of developing better digital marketing strategies that conclude with purchases, in this instance bookings.

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### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

#### *1.1 Background Information*

It is known that customer service is a topic of matter when we talk about the business reputation and furthermore if we relate it with the final decision regarding the customers. Within the hospitality industry, since it is inside the service industry, the importance increases (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). With this we carry the weight of

reaching customer satisfaction, that can be analysed with the disconfirmation paradigm theory (Oliver, 1980) Consequently, it is important to focus on this theory, due to the fact that satisfaction is a measure to predict the customer purchase tendency (Huang, 2012), an important data to determine how well a business is being run. Inside the hospitality industry, the aforementioned value can be studied in each area of the business. Nevertheless, in this research the author will focus on a new area that modified the

traditional business model, social media. Social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). From this point, it can be said that social media platforms can work as an important tool to develop business strategies, since users have the power to post in public platforms content that can damage or upgrade the reputation of an organisation, in this case a hospitality business.

Continuing talking about how a consumer behaves in social media platforms, interaction is one of the key features that can be developed to improve the relationship between the customers and the business. It is for that reason that Social Media Engagement Theory can be used to explain this research; inasmuch as it indicates that a well developed user experience, in regard to social interactions, will influence users engagement (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2016), and as a consequence, this latter would lead to a purchase. It is necessary to point out that the term "social interaction" used in this study, refers to customer service provided by social media, also known as "e-service." Finally, this research aim is to explore the impact the quality of service in the social media platform interaction has on customer's decision-making when choosing the JW Marriott in Lima, Peru.

### *1.2 Rationale of the study*

Social media has become an important tool for the hospitality industry, since nowadays customer's decisions are based on what they see in social media profiles of products and services. However, the author considers that an important point to talk about is the customer service offered in social media platforms and how developed it is in the hospitality industry. In this way this research can help and motivate hospitality businesses to improve and be aware of the quality service they are offering and how this affects the customer's loyalty. At the academic level there exist many other studies regarding social media engagement (Ghandour & Hussain, 2015) and as well about the service quality within hospitality businesses (Aydin, 2020). Moreover, online quality service has been also studied and measured in order to show how this impacts the profitability of in companies (Yang, et. al 2004). However, this article will fuse both concepts and analyse the impact of social media interaction at the moment of choosing and booking the JW Marriott Lima; where the quality of engagement and interaction given will be studied in order to analyse the perception of the potential guest. The reason why this topic is it relevant for the hospitality industry, it is because nowadays online

platforms are the main scenarios that showcase in an effectively way products and as well the interaction created between the consumer and the company, in this case the guest and the hotel, can create a sense of connection and a personalised service offered. Moreover, since online services are currently being rated and it has been proved that social media has a noticeable impact at the moment of decision-making, it is a matter of importance analysing how this can influence the selection when the potential guest will make a booking into a hotel or another. Taking this into account due to the fact that this platform is a free space for public opinion, the reputation of a hospitality business can be affected, and emphasising the service that a 5-star hotel has to provide; it is more than necessary keep a track how this can be as well in line with the quality standards that the company offers and how this matches with the audience's perceptions. As well, for the future hoteliers this will be a topic that will remain during the time and it is just starting, because thanks to technology we will maintain contact with future customers within any field by using social platforms, so in this way it can be said that analysing the impact of offering a quality service can prepare the path for an effective future trend related with online services.

### *1.3 Aim and objectives*

The aim of this research paper is to explore the impact the quality of service in the social media platform interaction has on customer's decision-making when choosing the JW Marriott in Lima, Peru.

The following objectives that support this aim are the following ones:

- To identify the effectiveness of social media platforms regarding the decision-making process.
- To investigate how well hotels are developing and investing in providing high quality services in social media platforms and how this affects their occupancy.
- To analyse why social media has earned a pivotal role in the field of engaging and attracting customers through the interaction offered in social media.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

#### *2.1.1 Quality Social Media Interaction: explained by SMET and DPT*

In this research, the author will apply Disconfirmation Paradigm Theory (Oliver, 1980) and Social Media Engagement Theory (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2016) to explain profoundly how providing high-quality customer service via social media platforms affects customer perception and in consequence influences their engagement with the business. To begin with, since one of the concepts used in the research is social media interaction and the role that are playing in business strategies, the author will apply the Social Media Engagement Theory (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2016). This theory identifies that the user experience, while interacting in social networks, influences their engagement with them. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), a social interaction is the "communication among users through social media". From this point, it can be said that, when a customer interacts via social media with a business and this experience, or in other words the e-service offered, achieves the users' interests and needs; they will have a forward looking behaviour that will lead to satisfaction and turn into an increasing of engagement (Erat, Desouza, Schäfer-Jugel, & Kurzawa, 2006). When it comes to engagement, the author considers this result beneficial because it can lead to a purchase if the consumer becomes more involved with the company (Gallup, 2021) and as well providing, e-service quality "influences customer consumption decision" (Yang and Jun, 2002; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003).

Regarding Disconfirmation Paradigm Theory, it will be developed hand in hand with two relevant concepts for this research: customer perception referred to e-service quality. E-service quality has become a determining factor for business success (Yang, 2001; Zeithaml, 2002), due to the fact that it fulfils customers' inquiries in an easy and dynamic way. It is worth noting that the world in which we live today encourages us to connect through electronic means, where everybody is allowed to interact. As aforementioned, this social interaction can be measurable with a previous perception. In this case, Disconfirmation Paradigm Theory talks about the customer's prior perceptions. The theory postulates that a customer makes purchase decisions led by a previous preconception or standard experiences of a prior product or service acquired. Consumer compares both experiences during and after the transaction; and depending on if the aforementioned outcome matches or has a difference with the preceding expectation, it is a confirmation or a disconfirmation. The confirmation occurs when both past expectations and the new performance suits. However, when between the aforementioned terms there is a disparity, disconfirmation has been given (Oliver, 1980). After this first stage of analysis it can just

measure the similarity between them. Nevertheless, what is significant to mention is that disconfirmation can hold positive and negative consequences (Yuksel, et. al 2001). As a result, it is necessary to take into account the level of customer service offered on social networks, since customers' prior perceptions must be surpassed and altered on a daily basis in order to generate profit and, as a result, grow their market share (Ghandour, 2015).

### 2.1.2 The connection between Customer Satisfaction and Purchasing Decision-Making

Customer Satisfaction is defined in many ways in the literature. Nevertheless, all of them coincide that it can be considered a cognitive and sometimes emotional process where the customer measures how their previous predictions with respect to a specific offer from companies were fulfilled. Expectation is an important term on where to focus at the moment of analysing satisfaction, since consumers base their purchase decision-making on that (Oliver, 1980) and as well, allows companies to develop effective management strategies (Yuksel, et. 2001). Concerning Purchase Decision-Making, the stage where customer satisfaction comes into play is in the Information Search step . Furthermore, prior experiences and preconceived notions influence as well the final purchase decision (Court, et. 2009; Dibb, 1997).

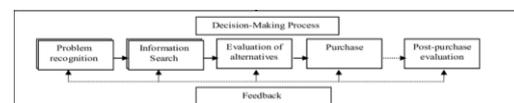


Figure 1. Consumer decision-making framework [adapted from: Dibb et al., 1997]

Bearing this in mind, the performance given at the moment of the first contact with a service or product that will be purchased is of great significance (Halstead et al., 1994), since it is the first impression that the customer has and can be the starting point to form or change the perception of the person (Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). For that reason, offering and being consistent about the high quality service is the key to reach or exceed customer's expectation and position over the competitors. Service quality also addresses the term of expectation, even so in service quality literature it is related to customers' needs and wants. In addition, it is about the service provided with an ideal standard expectation (Ruyter et al. 1997) and not the specific transaction (Parasuraman et al., 1988). Many authors mention that both definitions, service quality and customer satisfaction, are not absolutely related. However, according to Cronin

and Taylor (1992) and Parasuraman et al. (1988) both perceive that when the customer recognizes the quality of the service and makes a collective appraisal it reaches the satisfaction. Recently, the forms and ways of offering a service have changed exceedingly, and a fair point to start is how social networks have stayed in the forefront of making business strategies. According to Di Gangi and Wasko (2016), they can fulfil the users' desires; and as a result, it is used as a mass platform for promoting and advertising giving successful outcomes. In this manner, more businesses are applying and developing e-customer services into their websites or social profiles, in order to have major interaction with the customer (Lin and Lee, 2005) and engage them with the product since e-service quality can influence in purchase decision-making (Yang and Jun, 2002; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003). E-service quality is outlined as well as service quality, but linked with the online environment. One type of e-service that can be found is the one concerning digital customer service, which is considered the first service encounter for many enterprises, given the fact that customers' first interaction is about questions and doubts. This situation is an opportunity to increase customer motivation apropos of a product or service (Brown, 2014). In other words, it can be shown to push and pull factors that will impact purchase decision-making as aforementioned. According to the author, all the above concepts relate to the customers' final purchase, shown besides by the 3 previously mentioned theories.

## *2.2 Empirical Research*

### *2.2.1 Social media interaction as a influencing factor for purchase intention*

Purchase intention is a key factor for purchase decision-making. As stated by Peña-García, et. (2020); it refers to a customer's willingness to purchase a product. Alternatively, it involves more than just the relationship between the customer and the product itself. Purchase intention basis is related to the trust, motivation, and kindness provided by the company via online platforms (Oliveira et al. 2017). In this case, it has been discovered that using social media improves the consistency of a brand's relationship with respect to customers (Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016), a determinant aspect to increase the aforementioned features. However, kindness is an important characteristic that can be developed during the customer service offered through social platforms, since users' experiences are thought to cause three elements of online engagement (Dolan, Conduit, Fahy, & Goodman, 2016). As a result, the author identifies in studies that, in fact, "social media interaction has a positive effect on brand relationship quality and

other marketing outcomes (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that as stated by Gökhan Aydin (2020), social media has not been embraced as an effective marketing instrument yet by all the members of the luxury hospitality industry. However, a study by Leung, D et al. (2013) about the engagement of audience with social media, concluded that the latter notion "affects consumers' decision journeys, including reservation and purchase behaviours" in the hospitality industry.

Therefore, it can be said that social media is an option to be used as a tool for influencing and persuading customer's purchase intention in hotels, since it is demonstrated that the interaction between the user and the business in social platforms increases the brand awareness and grows a better relationship. Yet, social media is not a well developed instrument in the hospitality industry; which allows companies to take advantage in this field and increase profit through the process of purchase decision-making.

### *2.2.2 Quality customer service viewed from customer satisfaction perspective*

There are different studies about customer service and its impact when it is delivered with quality. The concept of service quality is interpreted by various authors, but the term in common as earlier mentioned is expectation. (Creedon, 1988; Lewis, 1988; Soutar, 2001). Customer expectation takes part when it has to be measured with customers' perception of service received or when it meets their needs and requirements (Mill, 2011; Lewis and Mitchell, 1990). Is for that reason that both concepts are linked one to each other and research studies their relation. According to Mill's studies (2011), when the career among competitors is founded by the price, is where quality becomes a key factor to consider; and after this, customer service becomes a way of satisfying customers. Nonetheless, Parasuraman et al. (1988) research postulates that a customer's satisfaction does not imply that they got good service. In contrast, Mill's recent study (2011) established that a good service experience that exceeds the guest's expectations turns into satisfaction. Having regard to what satisfaction can mean, it is clear that outreach is crucial to impress customers. In Mill's study (2011) DPT (Oliver, 1980) is used to qualify and verify customer satisfaction, which explains why it is more important to surpass customers' perceptions and risk having disconfirmation than it is to align satisfaction with expectations.

Delivering quality customer service is an essential aspect of success for any business. Quality customer service can be considered a critical

factor in the overall success of an organisation since it is the primary point of contact between the company and the customer. As such, developing effective strategies for delivering quality customer service is essential. According to M Christopher in the *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*, there are three characteristics that are necessary for successful customer service: “quality, dependability and flexibility” (1983). Additionally, Christopher suggests that customer service should be tailored to the specific needs of the customer and that organisations should be proactive in finding ways to improve customer service. By implementing strategies that focus on quality, dependability, and flexibility, organisations can ensure that they are delivering quality customer service and meeting the needs of their customers.

Quality customer service is essential for businesses to build relationships and gain customer loyalty. Studies of customer satisfaction have shown that providing high quality customer service impacts positively on customer loyalty, resulting in higher levels of customer satisfaction. Ultimately, business owners from all industries should heed the importance of quality customer service in order to remain competitive and ensure a steady stream of satisfied customers.

### *2.3 Background to the primary research context*

The aforementioned studies and research have shown that there is an existent interest regarding the analysis of how customers take into account a quality service at the moment of making a purchase. However, it has not been analysed and studied within the social media interaction in the hospitality industry. Is for that reason that in this research the author takes into consideration Mill’s studies (2011) where quality is a key factor that differentiates business regarding the competitors or as well the research where Oliveira et al. (2017) postulates that there is a relationship between the type of service delivered in social media platforms and the purchase intention. With these two main general concepts of previous studies the author introduces its statement in order to analyse if a quality perception interaction in social media impacts the purchase decision-making in JW Marriott in Lima, Peru.

### *2.4 Summary*

Audience’s perception about social media interaction can be measurable and explained in diverse forms. The author brings up three theories to demonstrate how the customer can make a final purchase decision from an effective and quality e-customer service. DPT (Oliver, 1980) proposes to always transcend customer

preconceived expectations, with the aim of satisfying the customer. Considering this explanation, SMET (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2016) indicates that a good social interaction experience (e-service quality) results in an increase of user engagement, which leads to a better brand relationship with customers that influence the purchase decision-making.

In conclusion, the author demonstrates how social interaction through social platforms affects user engagement in businesses. Online customer service is a fundamental part of the concept of social interaction, which is why providing a quality service and an excellent experience that exceeds the customer's previous expectations is necessary to influence the information search stage of the purchase decision-making process; and much more if applied in 5-star hotels where the audience has high expectations.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### *3.1 Research aim and objectives*

The aim that the author seeks in this research paper is to explore the impact the quality of service in the social media platform interaction has on customer's decision-making when choosing the JW Marriott in Lima, Peru.

The objectives that support this aim are the following ones:

- To identify the effectiveness of social media platforms regarding the decision-making process.
- To investigate how well hotels are developing and investing in providing high quality services in social media platforms and how this affects their occupancy.
- To analyse why social media has earned a pivotal role in the field of engaging and attracting customers through the interaction offered in social media.

### *3.2 Research Approach*

To begin explaining the flow of how this research will study the perception of customer’s decision-making based on social media interaction, instead of starting with the type of paradigm, the author has decided to explain firstly the model of approach that this research will have.

As believed by Ormerod (2009), there are two main factors that a deductive approach can not execute. On one hand it does not sufficiently describe how individuals truly think and on the other hand it has been found that it is unable to

define how individuals can react to their surroundings. That is the reason why in this research an inductive approach will be applied. It is the most accurate because this research's aim is to explore how the quality service delivered is perceived by the individuals and as well how this impacts in a decision, in other words explore how the individuals think and how individuals respond respect to an online service.

As well, since this research is based on analysing answers, people's behaviour and studying data; it is not necessary to deny a theory, a fact that only inductive approach has as characteristic (Woiceshyn, 2017). Moreover, according to Locke (2007), the research is based on what is already known, for example we will examine an individual's decision-making process, a concept that is already studied and researched. From this point of view, an inductive model as postulated by Soiferman (2010) expresses better observations and experiences, both situations that will be used to argue the author's objectives. (Trochim, 2006). Another statement important to mention about how an inductive approach suits better to the research is because due to the fact that hoteliers executives will be asked about the improvement they have been developing about social media platform's interaction it will be a base for enhancing models of how hotel industry should perform in this field; so in this way organisational behaviour knowledge associated to social media engagement in hotel industry will increase. (Locke, 2007).

A paradigm as Grix (2010) postulates is used "for the description of broad approaches to research". In this case the paradigm that will let the author explain and describe in more detail the approach of the research is the interpretative. An interpretive model tries to comprehend empathically human social behaviours and experiences (Smith and Heshsius, 1986), which will be applied by the author since the aim is to explore how individuals behave during the purchasing of hotel rooms and how the experience between them and the social media interaction influences the final decision. Moreover, as perception is involved as an aim of interpretative paradigm style it allows the author to bring insights about the problem or gap found within the research (Bryman, 2008; Grix, 2010); the aim as well of this investigation, explore individuals' perception.

Taking this statement into account, it can be mentioned that the adoption of the author for the interpretative paradigm is relativist ontology (Cohen et al., 2008; Crotty, 2003; Grix, 2010). For this reason the research will base its methods of exploring in perceptions of experiences to find the essence of the aim proposed.

In order to accomplish the objectives posed, the author will apply a phenomenology design that will introduce into the participants' experiences at the moment of booking a hotel, within their decision-making process and their previous experience interacting with social media platforms of the hotels that will be studied (Hussain et al., 2013). As well, since hoteliers executives will be interviewed, phenomenological design typically involves this aforesaid evaluation (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994) where the author will question the performance and their development of their social media platforms regarding the engagement they accomplished with their followers.

As a resume it can be said that the author's research methodology will be based in an inductive approach which will work in hand with an interpretative paradigm where a phenomenological design will be the tool for analysing participants' experiences via interviews associated in one part the relationship between consumer and social media platform and on other part between hotelier executive and their performance within social media platforms.

### *3.3 Sampling*

Since it is necessary to answer the questions that the author has posed in order to understand the issue proposed, it is significant to gather data from all the participants possible. However, it is not feasible to investigate the whole population; it is for that reason that sampling is the way researchers assess their aim with a small number of people that can reply to their examination. In this case the type of sampling technique used will be non-probability sampling. Also, this technique of sampling is related with inductive approach research which is suitable with this investigation (Taheedost, 2016). Within the non-probability sampling technique there are types of sampling that explain in detail how, what and why a certain sample has been selected for being questioned. For this research the author will apply two types of non-probability sampling. As first instance quota sampling because participants that will be chosen must have a group of characteristics in common (Davis, 2005). The author will choose from the population, 10 males and 10 females between the ages of 30 to 35 years old that are followers of JW Marriott Lima social media platforms that do not have booked rooms. Consequently, not all the population is suitable for this exercise, the reason why non-probability quota sampling is the technique that fits perfectly with the research.

Moreover, since that is not the unique sample of population that will be asked, the author proposes another non-probability technique that will help

to collect data from other populations that will bring another perspective to the aim posed. Purposive or judgmental sampling will be applied in order to ask Marketing Executives from JW Marriott regarding interaction in Social Media Platforms and outcomes of it. Both non-probability sampling techniques will allow the author to gather information about how the population perceives the interaction in social media delivered by JW Marriott in Lima, Peru.

### *3.4 Data Collection*

Subsequently to deciding the group of population that will be analysed it is necessary to determine the type of questions or tools that will be used to obtain the data that will be applied to explain the objectives of the research. It can be said that the author is realising qualitative research where a qualitative data collection is the chosen strategy to gather information from the sample selected. (Creswell, 2014). Since the author has two different perspectives to analyse the aim of the research, postulates that will use two types of qualitative data collection. For both groups will apply video call interviews with open-ended questions, where the first group who will be the social media followers will respond to questions about their online relationship between the hotel and the follower, tell about experiences within the social media platform with the hotel and as well about their purchase decision-making process. Regarding the group of Marketing Executives they will answer questions about the marketing strategies used in JW Marriott improving online booking through social media and their respective outcomes. This will be the first step to collect the essential data to study the aim of this research. Afterwards, as mentioned above there is a second qualitative tool that will be used in order to compare the answers given to tangible data. On that account, qualitative documents will be utilised to show outcomes of social media interaction and bookings.

### *3.5 Data Analysis*

The systematic assessment and evaluation of documents, including printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) content, is known as Data Analysis. This requires data to be reviewed and interpreted in order to extract meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge, just as other analytical approaches used in qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007; Bowen, 2009). In this research coding will be implemented in order to organise the questions asked in the video calls and will be transcribed using Microsoft Word to be analysed and managed by Atlas.it software; the participants will be named as followers and numbered , and the repetitive answers will be

assigned with a letter and number . Finally an example of the result of coding might be similar to the following code: F1/q2/a1.

### *3.6 Trustworthiness*

The presented research will give a qualitative research which should be evocative and precise to the current reality. Hence, it must be evaluated by the following concepts credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ballinger 2006) . Given this statement specific methods will be used in order to assure the trustworthiness of the research. Member checks will be applied by reassuring participants with agreement in the information given, as well as a detailed description of participants will be given to judge findings. Record of the data, methodology and decisions will be conducted and will be given an open and critically reflective analysis of the research technique. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Finlay, 2016, p.69).

### *3.7 Ethical Issues*

It is a fact that has to be considered the ethical segment in any research done, we collect information “from people, about people” (Punch, 2005) and it is an issue not to make the proper usage of this knowledge. In addition the participation of the population selected has to flow accordingly to respect, safeness and confidentiality. Avoiding any uncomfortable situation where the participant feels attacked or unprotected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, the identity of the individuals involved will not be revealed or distributed, and will be kept anonymously. Furthermore, transparency will be a pivotal role due to the fact that answers will not be twisted or manipulated. The information collected will be kept confidential in the researcher’s device.

### *3.7 Limitations*

As with every research, it has limitations that must be addressed; there is a limited size of the sample, since the research focuses on a limited group number as diversity without representing a broader population. Subjectivity can be a flaw, since participants can provide expected answers and the author may be influenced by prior experiences or personal interpretations of participants' responses (Leung, 2015).

## **Chapter 4: Discussion**

### *4.1 Introduction*

Social Media platforms usage, enhance the constancy of a brand's interaction with customers

(Hudson, Huang, Roth, & Madden, 2016). Interaction has been demonstrated that creates value and when it is personalised and meaningful can accomplish satisfaction (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004); which is a determinant point within the purchase decision-making process that as well involves the information search step that can be completed when engaging with social media platforms (Brown, 2014). The following chapter will discuss the main objectives of the research, which will show the relation of social media platforms engagement and the purchase decision-making processes about bookings. Nevertheless, due to the fact that primary research has not been done, the facts shown next will be analysed based on information from statistics and the literature.

*4.2 Discussion: To identify the effectiveness of social media platforms regarding the decision-making process.*

The e-service quality and the interaction within social media platforms perform essential roles in determining the perceptions and satisfaction from customers; afterwards affecting their purchasing decisions. Moreover, it has been found that responsiveness, trust affect and reliability provided in social media platforms through e-service, affects the service quality perception and the customer satisfaction, regarding the company, conducting to increase the likelihood of purchase (Lin and Lee, 2005; Gallup, 2021). In the case of JW Marriott Lima the engagement shown in their social media confirms that their followers use the platform in order to ask inquiries regarding prices, events, schedules and general information. All of the interaction is responded to by the community managers of the company providing the proper communication required (Instagram, 2023). This finding confirms that social media platforms are involved in the decision-making process, because they are used to find the knowledge the potential customer needs to solve their exploration in the Information Search step of the Consumer decision-making framework (Court, et. 2009; Dibb, 1997). However, the effectiveness indeed has not been proven because of not direct communication of a concluded transaction, it can only be assumed as a probable effectiveness from the positive comments regarding past stays and favourable interest for events, affirming that it may not yet become an efficient marketing tool for the high-end hospitality sector in. In addition, JW can bring closer to having a greater certainty of a purchase, providing constant response on their social media, due to the fact that even if their interaction rate is positive and outstanding they must achieve a constant engagement with effective answers after the communication, something that unfortunately has not been seen in their public platforms. The challenge

mentioned above will enable the hotel to capitalise on social media's potential for driving sales and maintaining a competitive edge.

*4.3 Discussion: To investigate how well Marriott Lima is developing and investing in providing high quality services in social media platforms and how this affects their occupancy.*

According to Oliver (1980), surpassing expectations from previous experiences and perceptions causes satisfaction. The DPT explains how client perceptions and expectations impact their decision-making. Hotels should aim to provide excellent customer service on social media in order to make a profit and increase market share (Ghandour, 2015). Di Gangi and Wasko (2016) with their Social Media Engagement Theory reinforces this finding, positing that the experiences that a user has while interacting on a social media platform influence their engagement. The Marriott Hotels social media strategy has been recognized as one of the best within the hotels belonging to large hotel chains and it has been communicated by them that they use social networks to attract more potential guests and direct them to generate bookings. It focuses on reassuring its customers that they are a business that values them. Marriott participates in the social dialogue listening to their customers through the comments and posts in their social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram, and within their mobile application (Unmetric, 2023; Samuely, 2017; Social Tables, 2023). Moreover, conforming to the Q&A realised by Samuely (2017) it is mentioned that because of the knowledge of Marriott Hotels about the significance of connect, enhance with guests experiences and use social media to reach potential customers. The mentioned fact is supported by Erat et al. (2006) affirmation that a good user experience on these platforms can boost customer satisfaction and engagement. In the case of the JW Marriott Hotel in Lima there is physical evidence in their Instagram and Facebook of interaction answering all types of comments reassuring their compromise of offering a quality service (Instagram, 2023; Facebook, 2023). However, what has been found is that there is a major positive response to the posts related to events and not to the ones that are associated with rooms facilities. Based on this finding, JW Marriott in Lima and Marriott hotels globally offer an outstanding e-service in their social media platforms, applying innovative strategies and fulfilling customer needs. It is shown that they are developing and investing in their services provided to customers in online social networks. On the other hand, in JW Marriott Lima, higher occupancy has not been reflected as an outcome of high quality service in social media platforms because of the majority of

interaction in posts related to events within the hotel, which might be positive for future potential guests but not confirmed bookings. It is advised to increase the promotion of hotel rooms and showcase constantly the benefits of staying in their facilities and not only advertise events. In this way, JW Marriott can improve their occupancy rates by doing this through fostering favourable customer views and promoting more user generated content (Ghandour, 2015).

*4.4 Discussion: To analyse why social media has earned a pivotal role in the field of engaging and attracting customers through the interaction offered in social media.*

Contemporary studies have shown that progress in technology, emphasising in online services, have caused a significant influence in the decision-making process and customer satisfaction (Yang and Jun, 2002; Wolfnberger and Gilly, 2003). Moreover, in connection with social media platforms, Leung et. al (2013) found that particularly in the areas of advertising, business administration, and research, they seem to be a crucial strategic instrument in the tourism and hospitality industries. Endorsing the latter notion, The SMT (Di Gangi and Wasko, 2016) confirms that engagement is accomplished when the user experiences interaction, which also creates value and achieves satisfaction of the consumers when it is meaningful and personalised (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). One of the challenges that most hotel businesses face is the consistency of maintaining the engagement in social media platforms. Nevertheless, JW Marriott Lima, after an analysis made by the author, every 3 posts on Instagram that have comments towards the facility 2 in 3 is answered by the e-service team, which is a high rate for a 5-star hotel with an average interaction of followers in social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. As well, it has been shown in their social media platforms that the interaction is crucial in order to attract more customers since it is used to communicate and generate value for the company. Nonetheless, it is recommended that the JW Marriott Hotel must evaluate the high-quality service on social media channels provided constantly, due to the fact that even though their interaction rate is high, they must achieve a 100% rate of engagement with positive answers after the communication, something that unfortunately has not been seen in their platforms. From this statement, it can be confirmed that social media platforms can earn through the following years more significance in order to attract customers with the help of the recent technology advancements.

*4.5 Conclusion*

The present discussion demonstrated that social media platforms effectively have an impact on potential customers when they are into the Information Search step from the purchase decision-making process in the case of JW Marriott in Lima. However, it has not been assured of a high efficacy of it regarding bookings. In addition, the author expects that a future assessment of e-service provided will explore more into the influence on how interacting with customers in social media platforms can increase the occupancy rate of JW Marriott in Lima and consequently apply the strategy in other Marriott brands located in the same city.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

The exploration of the impact the quality of service in the interaction of social media platforms has on the decision making process of customers when choosing the JW Marriott in Lima, Peru; has established over this research that there is a significance of the components that are provided such as personalization of the interaction, query response time and communication within the customer' purchase decision making process in regard of the Information Search step. Moreover, it has been found that JW Marriott has a high engagement rate after analysing the rapid response to comments of followers about general information like prices, schedules and events; 2 in 3 posts are answered by the e-service team with the proper communication in Instagram and Facebook. In addition, JW Marriott has shown that they are improving and developing their digital marketing strategy in social media platforms by showcasing their services and products on a regular basis of 2 to 1 posts per day. However it is necessary to highlight that the main display in their social media platforms are events and facilities for external guests, a fact not expected to be the focus, since the investigation was referred to purchase decision-making on bookings. The qualitative research and inductive approach provided a better understanding of the findings because they enable the analysis of individual responses to an online service and how they perceive it. The findings are of big significance, because it will allow JW Marriott to manage effectively the social platforms in order to redirect their strategy and include more exposure to their essence as a hotel which are the rooms. As well, it will help to improve and maintain their active presence in other platforms like Twitter or Tripadvisor. It is vital to consider the limitations of the research, since the sample is narrow, focused in one city and country; additionally bias from the author might influence perception from the findings and ultimately the research investigates just two social media

platforms from one hotel which does not provide a wider concrete explanation. Further investigation can be added to analyse the engagement in 4-star hotels with younger generations interviewed, or applying a qualitative research where experiments can be done by analysing the amount of interactions related to the number of bookings, or following the customer journey of the sample taken and confirming the final purchase decision made.

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