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Dalia Uwonkunda, Dr Ernest Safari & Mr Abuto Benson

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Contribution of Social Media Networks Usage on Performance of Selected Upmarket Hotels Based in Kigali- Rwanda

¹*Dalia Uwonkunda

¹Postgraduate Student, University of Mount Kenya, Kigali, Rwanda

*Email of the corresponding author: daliakagwene@gmail.com

²Dr Ernest Safari

²School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Mount Kenya, Kigali, Rwanda

Email: esafari@mkurwanda.ac.rw

³Mr Abuto Benson

³School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Mount Kenya, Kigali, Rwanda

Email: babuto@mku.ac.ke

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Abstract

The contribution of travel and tourism industry to Rwanda's GDP increased from 4.7% in 2000 to 15.1% in 2019 with an average annual rate of 7.02%. It is evident that the hospitality industry relies on the use of information and communication technologies in marketing, promotional activities, sales and creation of relationships with their customers. However, there has been limited research to assess the contribution of social media networks to the performance of hospitality industry in Rwanda. Thus, the objective of the study was to assess the effect of social media network usage, determine how the selected hotels use social media networks to reach out to their customers and establish the most popular social media platforms. Using a descriptive research design, the study adopted a hybrid approach of both qualitative and quantitative approach for collection of data and employed both primary and secondary research methods to collect data including formulation of interview in form of a questionnaire. Results revealed that social media networks have significantly contributed to the performance of the selected upmarket hotels in Kigali and have been used for marketing purposes to attract customers. It was found that about 96.4% of the hotels' clients use social media platforms to make bookings while the least indicate that at least 3.6% of most of respondents indicated that social media networks had a small impact to their hotel business. The most commonly used platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. In conclusion, the paper highlights the importance of social media in the upmarket hotel segment in Kigali, Rwanda, and its impact on the hospitality industry. The findings of the study indicate that social media has had a positive impact on the performance of upmarket hotels, with a high percentage of customers using social media to make bookings. The study recommends that hotels collect and keep records of their customers indicating which mode of communication they use while making bookings. These records must indicate which uses social media to access various hotel services. Also, hotels should ensure that they have appropriate staff with IT skills to operate and manage social media networks, including using them to get reviews for future improvement of their services. The hotels should continue investing in social media to attract customers and promote their brands. Hotels should ensure a presence on multiple social media platforms to reach a wider audience. Finally, hotels should continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of social media usage on their performance to identify areas for improvement and optimize their social media strategy.

Keywords: *Social Media Networks, Upmarket Hotels, Hospitality, Performance, Rwanda*

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1.0 Introduction

Several research studies have been carried out to understand how social media networks have influenced operations of hospitality industry. The main reason is that, social media is an emerging tool through which tourism and hospitality industry have adopted to reach out their customers. The study conducted by Zeng (2015) asserts that social media networks play a key role in the tourism industry and as it continues to grow, the tourism industry will take advantage of various social media platforms since the industry has depended on gaining destination driven reputation based on consumer opinion, disseminating information and positive word-of-mouth advertising. However, the study identified that social media usage remains a challenge and tourism management has not realized the importance of social media usage as a strategy for marketing adding that there is no measurable strategy to indicate its return on investment and therefore integrating social media networks into tourism business processes remains a challenge.

While investigating the impact of Social Networking Sites on Hospitality and Tourism Industries, Yazdanifard & Yee (2014) identified how content on social networking sites may impact both positively and negatively the operations of hospitality and tourism industry. The study identified how variables such as connection with consumers and consumer behavior impacts the industry and ensures effectiveness in terms of time and cost, creating brand awareness and building the reputation of the hotel thereby attracting consumers. It also identified how a consumer could use social media to communicate a false statement or giving a testimony based on his/her personal perception that may negatively impact the image of the company. This is common nowadays where tourists will first analyze comments and testimonies given in reviews and blogs posted by previous guests regarding their experiences on certain hospitality establishments.

The study conducted by Sabanaeva (2017) identified several factors contributing to the increase of social media networks usage as useful travel information source for tourists. Honesty, dependability, reliability, sincerity and trustworthiness were identified by the study as some of the contributing factors. The study revealed how the development of social media networks has created an environment where users create content for themselves revealing places of their previous visits which indicates how tourism destinations have lost control over their social media content that is accessible online by the public including the product's quality and prices which influence their travel planning. Tourists depend on online Word of Mouth (eWOM) before deciding on their final destinations. In a related study conducted by Živković, Gajić & Brdar (2014) to assess impact of social media networks on tourism, acknowledges the importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and modern digital media in promoting tourism activities, helping in their sales and develops their relationships with customers. The study estimates that approximately 50% of travelers download travel applications to help make informed decisions by searching their destinations before they go for their holidays.

In Rwanda, little research has been undertaken to understand social media impact on development of hospitality industry. This paper discusses some relevant research studies that were conducted locally in relation to the topic under study. In a report entitled "the internet and tourism in Rwanda" produced by Foster & Graham (2014) aimed at analyzing the effect of the changing connectivity in hospitality and tourism sector and understanding who benefits and who doesn't. The study identified that "online visibility and associated communications offer

the potential for Rwandan firms to more directly reach customers, support recommendations and market their goods”. In a study conducted by Kalulu (2020) to analyze the effective use of social media as a competitive advantage in tourism industry in Rwandan Rural Tourism Areas, revealed that effective use of social media networks can play a significant role by facilitating direct interaction between hotels and their customers and helps in monitoring and evaluation of services offered. The study further identified that social media networks such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and trip advisor were commonly used with Facebook being the most preferred media platform of all. The study was however limited to rural areas and silent on the number of visitors who use social media networks and did not reveal to what extent does the social media platforms contribute to the selected hotels.

The study asserts that few tourist firms use web resources and social media networks and some larger hotels have integrated social media services into their businesses to attract customers. Online visibility also supports improved awareness and increases the number of customers. Small firms entering tourism business may however be affected due to the incumbent firms who have already established their businesses and integrated with social media platforms adding that developing online skills can boost the industry and make it viable for entrepreneurs. The study also identified that digital connectivity alone has not transformed tourism industry adding that there are other transformative effects such as skills of integrating social media platforms into their businesses and online services were found not to be fitting concerning needs of Rwandans which limits viability.

The hospitality industry is likely to be the customer-fundamental and one that prices itself by reaching out to its customers and providing a modified experience. In traditional marketing, our lives are saturated by radio, media and television. One of the disadvantages of traditional marketing is the high cost and is a one-way communication. Although there is a noticeable and increasing role of technology in accelerating the growth of hospitality industry worldwide, little research has been carried out to assess if there is a value added that comes with usage of social media networks by hotels in Rwanda. Limited studies have also been conducted to determine how hospitality and tourism industry have used social media to reach out to their customers. Furthermore, limited research has been undertaken to assess the contribution of social media networks as platforms through which hotels can attract tourists given their different demographic categories around the globe. In addition, no justification based on research that has been undertaken to determine if social media networks are more preferred tools than other traditional approaches used in reaching out to customers in the hospitality market (Sabanaeva, 2017).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook, are emerging ways of advertisement of products and services and one way of communication to meet guest’s expectations, its contribution to the performance of hospitality industry remains unclear. Limited research has been done to assess the impact of social media networks to the performance of hospitality industry in Rwanda. It is thus important to understand the extent to which social media networks contribute to the performance of hospitality industry especially the upmarket hotels (4 and 5-stars hotels) based in Kigali. Furthermore, the grading system and hotel assessment adopted by Rwanda Development Board (RDB), looks only at the availability of internet in hotels but does not assess how this internet is used through social media platforms to develop upmarket hotels before they attain a certain level of stars’ accreditation. Hence,

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there is need for a research to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media networks to the selected upmarket hotels. The study attempts to evaluate contributing factors for reliance on social media networks by upmarket hotels in Kigali and how such platforms boost growth of their businesses. In view of the above, the study aims at assessing performance of hotels while using social media platforms and draw some recommendations for the selected upmarket hotels and hospitality industry in general and determine how social media networks can improve their performance and enhance the development of the industry. It is important to understand how hotels can develop their brands and market their services using social media networks. Finally, the study also aims to analyze and identify the most appropriate types of social media networks used by the selected hotels in their endeavors to market and advertise their products globally.

1.2 Research Objectives

- i) To assess the effect of social media networks usage on the performance of selected upmarket hotels in Kigali-Rwanda
- ii) To determine how hotels, use social media networks to reach out to their customers in the selected upmarket in Rwanda.
- iii) To establish the most popular social media networks used by the selected up-markets hotels.

2.0 Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Literature

Social media networks are playing a critical role in attracting tourists to the hospitality industry and acts as decision making tool and marketing strategy by hoteliers in the industry. They create a more interactive relationship with customers and supports hospitality industry in developing products thereby expecting value for their business. The usage of social media networks helps customers to connect, gather and offer valuable information about their hotel experiences which facilitates them in identifying hotels of their choice. The theoretical and empirical literature makes a review of theories, models and past studies conducted in relation to the topic under study. Various authors, researchers and academicians have introduced archetypal theories Monod, Qi, Fang, & Deng (2018) and different views have emerged in relation to the coexistence of social media in the field of information systems (IS). This study discusses four main theories related to the topic based on philosophical foundations. These include; Goffman's presentation of self, Heidegger's "shared-world, Bourdieu's social capital, and Sartre's existential project.

2.1.1 Contribution of Social Media Networks Usage

Previous literature has investigated the contribution of social media networks usage on performance of institutions as well as the relation between internet as a system and performance. For example, in the study conducted by Schneider et al., (2016) to analyze the impact of social media usage on organizations, the results revealed significant impact of social media as well as internet in terms of revenue generation, improved relationships with customers, decrease in terms of expenditure and time saving (Parveen, 2018). In the same attempt to assess the impact of social media platforms on online marketing, Shuai et al., (2011) argues that there is a positive association between online marketing with the organization's performance. This means that when firms use social media networks for tasks such as digital

marketing and searching for information, there is a positive impact on their performance especially in terms of cost reductions, enhanced customer relationships and access to information. The same literature contends that social media platform is a tool has registered significant contribution in terms of promotion of firm's products, marketing, solving customer related matters, bringing innovative concepts as well as building strong relationships with customers (Solis, 2010).

2.1.2 Upmarket Hotels

While analyzing the application of revenue management (RM) practices in star-rated hotels in Kenya, the findings of Murimi & Wadongo (2021) revealed that star-rated hotels [upmarket hotels for the present study] have adapted and integrated social media practices in their revenue management efforts as means to address matters related to customer's hotel reservations and bookings thereby improving their performance. Star-rated hotels are expected to practice revenue management as a result of the increase in adoption of internet based tools such as surveys, social networking and availability of online reviews. Hotels can adapt these web-based platforms during the design stage of their products, provision of services and as well as during pricing (Varini & Sirsi, 2012).

2.1.3 Usage of Social Media Networks

The usage of social media networks has become more popular and has been accelerated by the adaption of internet and phone-based applications. Unlike in traditional ways of marketing, these digital application tools have helped marketers to easily disseminate information of their products and services. Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu (2018) notes that nowadays, the number of social networks users has increased and outnumbered the population of some countries. Such increase becomes evident when the marketing is weighed before and after the introduction of social media networks and other online technologies. Social media advertisement has helped businesses and online users to avail user generated content on various products and services and allows for consumers to provide comments and product reviews for future improvement.

2.1.4 Effect of Social Media Networks on Increased Number of Guests

Hotels have adopted social media platforms with the aim to market their products and services as a means to attract more guests. Akram & Kumar (2017) notes that social media integrates businesses, brands and associations which acts as an influence to the companions and results into relations that yield into meeting business targets by increasing offers per year. The study asserts that an organization can provide a promotion using online platforms with a specific goal of targeting and gaining attention of greatest customer base with a big number of potential clients. This may result into association and collaboration with businesses on individual basis as a strategy to market and promote their businesses. However, poor service delivery, lack of consistency in customer care services and bad reviews by guests may affect the reputation of hotels and consequently result into reduction in numbers of their guests.

2.1.5 Brand Awareness

The growth of social media networks has created digital channels through which firms interact with their customers. Ibrahim & Ganeshbabu (2018) asserts that social media platforms provide wider marketing opportunities that builds Brand online using websites and social media platforms. The ranking of a firm's website using search engines may have a great impact to the

firm's brand image and attract more customers thereby boosting its business growth. Marketing activities through social media platforms have become effective elements which contributes to brand image and builds brand loyalty. Previous literature also reveals a significant impact of brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty. However, although there is a significant impact of brand awareness and brand image on brand loyalty, the contribution of brand awareness on brand image itself has been found to be limited (Bilgin, 2018).

2.1.6 Social Networking

There are approximately 4.7 billion users registered on various social networking sites across the world and about 2.3 billion are considered to have joined in the last 12 months and on average, social media users spend around 2 hours and 29 minutes daily. Das & Sahoo (2011) asserts that his growing popularity of social media usage has become caused addiction and anxiety and turns private and public life into a digital document. Social networking has become the most popular tools used in all disciplines of life ranging from political, education, marketing and social aspects of life. Zaidieh (2012) reveals that social networking sites have brought both benefits and challenges; its flexibility, convenience, accessibility is among the vital advantages of social media networks. However, the study further reveals that a part from being time consuming social media usage is associated with privacy concerns where users may complain about their privacy online when there is little done to protect it.

2.1.7 Effects of Social Media Network on Business Growth

Unlike in traditional ways where business used radio channels, televisions and newspapers to market their products, the media landscape has been changed with the introduction of social media which is a communication tool like any other media form except that social media uses highly scalable and accessible techniques. In terms of business growth, social media is seen to have a positive impact on both companies and consumers. Companies spend less on marketing using social media than using other traditional tools of marketing like radios and TVs, this means that there is less investment by businesses on marketing which means that operation cost becomes less allowing the company to grow. The performance of companies nowadays is measured on how it has established its strong presence online by trying to identify demands of their customers and meeting their demands (Sengar, 2021). However, previous studies also reveal that social media can have negative impact on business growth especially through bad online reviews, issues of violating personal privacy which may tarnish its image and brand on social media networks (Kaushik, 2012).

2.1.8 Reputation of Hotel Brand

Previous literature indicates that social media platforms if properly utilized, they can become marketing tools to promote firm's products and services and attract more customers. Hotels also rely on social media to interact with their customers globally. The appropriate content on social media networks providing options for hotel bookings, and payments online make it easier for customers to identify hotels of their choice without using third party companies who are agents that are associated with commission fee. Positive reviews also help tourists and other visitors to provide their level of satisfaction on the services provided by various establishments which also promotes reputation of hotels. However, there has been concerns that when hotels receive bad comments and criticisms on their services, such abuse may affect reputation of the hotel brand (Kaushik, 2012).

2.1.9 Effect of Social Media on Employment Opportunities

Effects of social media networks may have both positive and negative effects on employment; Social networks are progressively influencing labour market as a result of information exchange related to job opportunities and increases employment probabilities with an addition of 3 to 12 % (Burns et al., 2010). For example, companies identify competent workforce through LinkedIn where users make their qualifications available online. Nowadays, social media networks get incentives from social media owners when they hit a certain number of subscribers or followers and gain some money out of it. Companies also use social media influencers whom the majority are young people to advertise their products and services and receive commission in return thereby creating employment opportunities. However, social media may affect work environment and have a negative effect on business productivity as a result of workers spending many ours on social media. The study conducted by (Das & Sahoo, 2011) reveals that about 70% of employees spend hours chatting, updating status and watching videos on Facebook. Social media has also become a bad habit just the way consumers become addicted to alcohol and drugs, social media have equally become addictive and deprives employees from office work.

2.2 Empirical Literature

According to Gani (2017), customers can discover information related to hotels on social media either posted by their relatives and companions thereby saving them money unwanted anxiety. The motivation behind this study is founded on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which try to understand reasons why consumers intend to search for information related to hotels using social media. The user's technology usage and acceptance behavior of TAM theory was also built on the theory of reasoned action which attempts to address the issue of how users accept and utilize technology. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is also an extension of the theory of reasoned action which acknowledges behavioral, normative, and behavioral control as three main convictions. The Information Adoption Model, Sussman and Siegal (2003) relates to how people form intend tolerate knowledge about their behavior, thoughts, or technology (Filieri & McLeay, 2013). The model emphasizes the need for value, usefulness and reliability of sources of information as important aspects that shape user's decisions Gani (2017). Information on hotels is made available by people, hotels and previous visitors and therefore selection of hotels requires adequate information online. In line with this, IAM helps to comprehend complex decisions where users would carefully make selection available information sources to make their hotel plans and choices which means that consumers choose and trust information sources in different ways (Mayr & Zins, 2009). The research conducted by Diaconu & Dutu (2020) asserts that, there is need for tourism organizations to continuously innovate to remain competitive and retain their market power. The development of new technologies has led to the expansion of distribution channels which significantly saves time to process reservations, and helps to create relationships with various f organizations in the same market segment. The business management in hospitality industry has undergone various changes over the past decades, the emergence of internet and use of ICT coupled with globalization has enabled e-business and e-commerce creating new opportunities for hoteliers to avail information online to be accessed by travelers while making their reservations in a timely manner prior to deciding on their holiday destinations (Diaconu & Dutu, 2020).

2.3 Critical Review and Research Gap Identification

Although the role of social media networks in the tourism and hospitality industry, some areas in the sector needs experts and researchers to adequately cover the gap. It is evident that the number of users who rely on media networks as a foundation of their research on various tourist destinations continues to rise at a high rate. It is assumed that this rise in numbers of social media users is attributed to the fact that information provided by hospitality industry is accurate and updated and well describes these destinations in relation to the services, products, and experiences they offer to their customers. The assumption is however not verified since it is not clear to what extent do hotels in Rwanda rely on social media networks to reach out to their customers. In addition, it is not known whether the information provided on the websites or social media networks is accurate and is up to date to reflect the products and services offered by various hotels in their effort to attract potential tourists while making informed choices about their desired destinations. While social media networks continue to strategize ways of how tourist's destination are connected as well as service satisfactory for the customers. There is need to observe the power of customers because of the rising popularity of social media networks which has forced promoters of all kinds to change the ideal purpose of customers satisfactory on market competition (Sabanaeva, 2017).

Arguably, it is believed that social media networks play a big purpose in supporting tourists to research on and in planning their destinations, and no research that shows actual estimate of tourists who depend on social media platforms as they plan to travel to different destinations and making reservations to the selected hotels. Also, it is important to discover the real estimation of customers that use social media frequently to evaluate how various categories of tourists use social media platforms in planning their travel arrangements (Sabanaeva, 2017). There is also no evidence based on research that clearly shows which media platforms are preferred more than others are which leaves a gap for hotels to identify which social media networks are more suitable to push their information to attract potential guests. Overall, the contribution of social media networks to the upmarket hotels in Rwanda remains unclear and the challenges affecting the usage of such platforms also remain unrevealed hence the need for this research.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework that provides a systematic approach to understanding the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and other factors that may affect this relationship. It helps to guide the research design and analysis and provides a theoretical foundation for interpreting the results of the study.

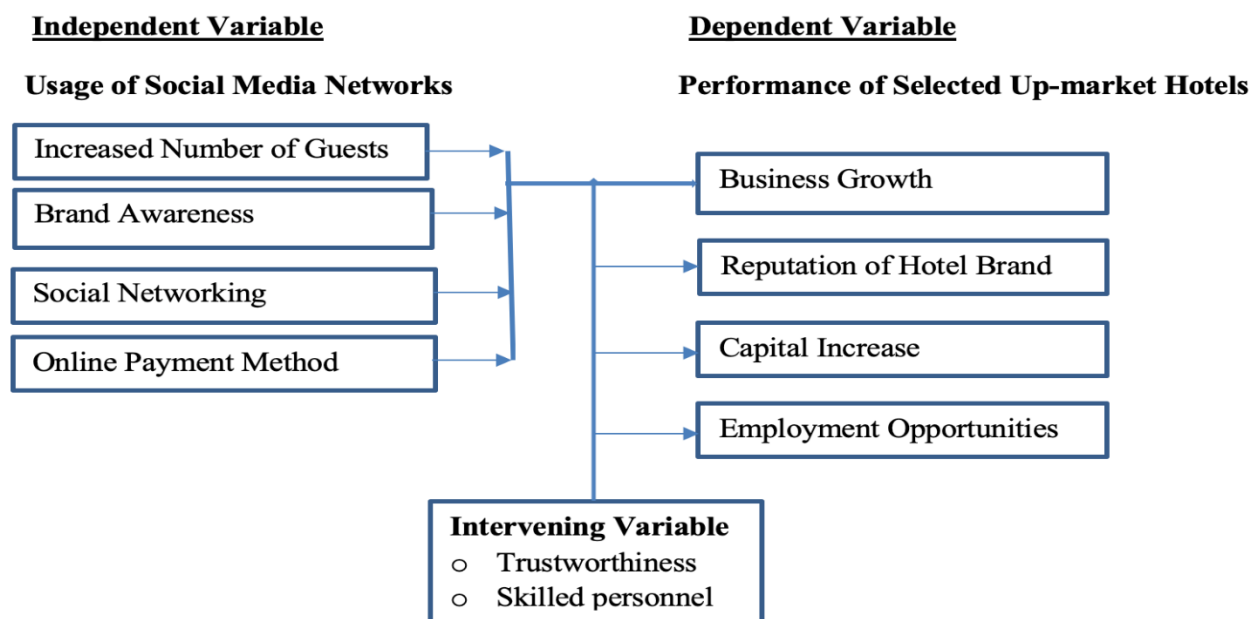


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Author, 2020)

3.0 Research Design and Methods

The study employed a mixed method research design. According to Keele (2010), the mixed method research is used as an approach for inquiry that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches which helps in collecting data that can be presented in numerical form and those data that cannot respectively. In this paper, a mixed method research approach was used to collect and analyze data from past research findings by identifying the literature review of similar studies both from local, regional and international perspectives. Similarly, quantitative data was collected from upmarket hotels based in Kigali to affirm or reject previous observations related to the role of social media networks in hospitality business. Data was collected using a survey in a form of a questionnaire and was submitted to all selected upmarket hotels using electronic means. The data collection techniques employed within this research included primary as well as secondary research methods, by use of interview and questionnaires. Thus, contributing to the data analysis to come up with research findings. The study relied on secondary data collected from various dissemination tools, mainly electronic references and primary data was collected from 4-5 stars' hotels based in Kigali.

The study targeted upmarket hotels and assessed the usage of social media networks to attract tourists within Rwanda or across the world. The target population was Seven (7) upmarket hotels with 4-5-stars which were used for collection of data. These included; Radisson Blu Hotel, Serena hotel, Marriot Hotel, Ubumwe Grande Hotel, Park Inn by Radisson, Lemigo Hotel and Grand Legacy Hotel from which 8 respondents were chosen to make 56 participants in this study. The sample size was composed of hotel managers and were categorised according to their age, gender (Male or Female) and level of education according to demographic profile of respondents. The study used a mix of sampling approaches according to the nature of the required data. Convenience sampling technique was applied to the selected upmarket hotels who holds specialized knowledge on social media networks in the field hospitality industry and

are easy to contact. According to Sabanaeva (2017) the study of this kind adopts nonprobability sampling which is a subset of probability sampling because the researcher cannot predict which elements would be selected as a true representation of the whole hospitality industry. Sampling technique was applied to find sample elements from a big number of hotels based in Kigali. The study used surveys in form of questionnaires to collect data.

4.0 Key Results and Findings

4.1 Impact of Social Media Networks Usage on the Performance of Selected Upmarket Hotels

For closed questions, responses were provided by all respondents in the selected upmarket hotels based on YES or NO format. As presented in table 1, all respondents responded with a YES to all closed questions. This reveals that all selected upmarket hotels strongly rely on the usage of social media networks to deliver services to their customers hence improving their level of performance. For open ended questions, respondents provide open answers to various questions as tabulated in table 2.

Table 1: Presentation of Results

S/N	Open Ended Questions	Frequency	Percentage	Response
1.	Does your hotel use social media networks to advertise and market your products and services?	56	100.0	Yes
2.	Does your hotel have an online payment system?	56	100.0	Yes
3.	Does your hotel have any agreement with e-commerce websites such as bookings.com, expedire.com etc.?	56	100.0	Yes
4.	Has your hotel used social media in the past six months?	56	100.0	Yes
5.	Would you consider using social media networks to make your future Travel plans?	56	100.0	Yes
6.	Are you members of any social networking platform?	56	100.0	Yes
7.	Does your hotel have a website?	56	100.0	Yes
8.	Does your hotel have social media platform that gives guests to provide their reviews?	56	100.0	Yes
9.	Does your hotel have broadband internet connection?	56	100.0	Yes
10.	Does your hotel have a Wi-Fi	56	100.0	Yes
11.	Does your hotel have dedicated staff to handle online requests and inquiries?	56	100.0	Yes
12.	Do you think that hospitality industry in Rwanda needs strong social networks to grow?	56	100.0	Yes

Table 2: Impact of social media networks on the performance of the selected upmarket hotels

In general, has social media made a big/ small impact to your hotel?		Frequency	Percentage
	A big one	2	3.6
	Big	2	3.6

In general, it has made a very big impact since today social media is used by almost everyone everywhere in the world.	2	3.6
It has helped our hotel to reach out to our customers way far	2	3.6
It has made a tremendous impact	2	3.6
it has made a very big impact	2	3.6
It helped us big time	2	3.6
It made a very big impact	2	3.6
Our business was known because of social media	2	3.6
Social media had brought our hotel on top because of many people who always reach on us through our media	2	3.6
Social media has a small impact to my hotel, we are on all social networks but not really active or updated	2	3.6
Social media has contributed a lot	2	3.6
Social media has made a big impact to our hotel because anyone can access our medias worldwide	2	3.6
Social media made a big impact to our business.	2	3.6
Very big	4	7.1
Very big impact for our business	2	3.6
Very big one	2	3.6
We have received many impacts for social media as it's helping our establishment to reach to our customers and get to hear from them	2	3.6
Yes	4	7.1
Yes, very big one	2	3.6
Yes, because it increases hotel visibility	2	3.6
Yes, big impact	2	3.6
Yes, it does	4	7.1
Yes, it had done a tremendous work to reach our targets	2	3.6
Yes, it has made a positive impact	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2021)

In line with the first objective to assess the impact of social media networks on the performance of upmarket hotels in Kigali, the majority of respondents indicated a very big impact of social media networks in trying to reach out to their customers. They highlighted how social media helps their establishments to reach their customers worldwide. The hotels choose to use social media networks mainly to increase their visibility and attract customers as well as making their products available online. It is part of marketing strategies to brand the hotel as well as displaying products and the best room rate of the hotel online showing the location as well as promoting international brand. The results reveal that 3.6% of most of respondents indicated that social media networks have had a small impact whereas the remaining 96.4% of them revealed that the impact on usage of social media networks was very big in improving delivery of their services and reaching out to their customers. The result confirms the findings of Zeng

(2013) who indicated that the best and most important way for communicating and promoting products in tourism industry is through social media adding that these platforms help in advertising the latest products in a real time than any other means of marketing products. Yazdanifard and Yee (2014) further emphasizes that social media usage is instrumental especially when promotions become available at the last time a during last minute instead of printing leaflets to be distributed to different places which is also cost effective considering that social media platforms have millions of users and followers which would be costly if hospitality establishments were to print and distribute leaflets to a such big mass of people. Also, there is no manual way of transporting such promotions which saves and time and cost. The degree of social media usage is also confirmed in the findings of Živković, Gajić and Brdar (2014) who indicated that several survey results have revealed that roughly 50% use social medial applications to search for destinations before leaving for their vacations.

4.2 Social Media Usage by Selected Upmarket Hotels to reach out to their customers

In line with objective two to assess how upmarket hotels use social media networks to reach out to their customers, this section discusses results related to the second objective the paper as contained in the following tables.

Table 3: Guests who have used your social media networks for bookings

Number of guests who have used your social media networks for booking		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	10% of the bookings at any given period	2	3.6
	35% roughly	2	3.6
	45%	2	3.6
	60%	2	7.1
	65%	2	3.6
	70% Book through our social media	2	3.6
	75% of our guests	2	3.6
	A big number use our websites and the rest use social media	2	3.6
	Approximately 60%	2	3.6
	Approximately 80	2	3.6
	At least 80%	2	3.6
	I can't be specific but at least 60%	2	3.6
	I cannot be precise but I would say around 4000	2	3.6
	I can't be specific but most of our guests and clients likes to use social media to get information. So around 95% use utilize our social media	2	3.6
	I would say 95% of our customers always book	2	3.6
	Information not provided	2	3.6
	It's very hard to precise the percentage number but I would say roughly 50%	2	3.6
	like 50% of guests would use our social media to book the hotel accommodation	2	3.6
	Like 70%	2	3.6
Like 90%	2	3.6	
Like around 75%	2	3.6	

Majority of our guests use our social media platforms to inquire about our F& B services. Guest rooms and conference Centre related inquiries usually are channeled through our hotel and convention Centre website or in-person inquiries during sales calls	2	3.6
Many of our guests prefer to book before they arrive to our hotel	2	3.6
Since 2020, the number of guests we used to receive went down	2	3.6
There are many according to the reviews we normally receive	2	3.6
There are many of them	2	3.6
Very few only restaurant services	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Table 4: Customers from social media

Where do you get your clients? % from travel agents or other companies, % from your own website, % from directly via email or telephone, % from social media?		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	50% agents, 20% website and 30% direct	2	3.6
	50% from tour and travel agents; 30% from our website;10% from social media	2	3.6
	70% Other companies and travel agents; 20% from website; 6% from email and telephone; 4% from social media	2	3.6
	A big number of our customers are coming from our agents and the rest from social media	2	3.6
	From the hotel website	2	3.6
	I can't be specific but at least 60%	2	3.6
	I cannot tell as it's done by the sales and marketing department	2	3.6
	I can't be precise but I would say that we always get clients either through our social media or companies as well as agents sometimes	2	3.6
	Like around 55%	2	3.6
	like between 50-60	2	3.6
	Majority are coming from travel agents, we do have others who use social media to reach on us and others visit our website while doing booking	2	3.6
	Majority of our clients are from our agents	2	3.6
	Many of our clients are coming from our travel agents, website;	2	3.6
	Marketing and sales put more effort in advertising trough all hotel channels	2	3.6
	No answer	2	3.6
	Our clients are from both social media and through visiting different companies	2	3.6

Our clients come to all the mentioned platforms.	2	3.6
Our customers are coming from online, through our agents	2	3.6
Sales department are in charge to know this information	2	3.6
Some guests would dial the hotel line and others will visit the website together with our social media	2	3.6
Through advertisement and attending different events	2	3.6
Through our social media platforms	2	3.6
Unable to disclose this information	2	3.6
We do get our customers from the travel agents, others are coming from our websites	2	3.6
We receive guests from different market segments including the ones mentioned	2	3.6
We receive clients through directly to us and through our corporate agents	2	3.6
We receive our guests from word of mouth and through our websites	2	3.6
We receive them through our social media platform and trip advisor	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2021)

Results indicate that some establishments have good collaboration with international companies and get their customers from their branches across the world. Table 5.3 indicate that 96.4% of the hotels use social media networks for bookings at different levels according to respondents. Whereas, 3.6% respondents indicate that the number of guests received from social media platforms went down since the Year 2020. Just like using other channels of hotel advertisement, such as websites, travel agents and other search engines, the study indicate that at least 92.8% of upmarket hotels rely on social media platforms at different levels to reach out to their customers and 7.2% of the respondents did not respond and/or could not disclose the information as presented in table 4.

4.3 Popular Social Media Networks Used

Table 5: Popular Social Media Networks Used

How do you ask for feedback from your clients or from other companies? Have you had any experience with online feedback/reviews on social media?	Frequency	Percentage
All our guests are advised to give their feeding back via hotel website and on our different social media platforms	2	3.6
All our guests provide their feedback on the forms we give them during checkout	2	3.6
Because of COVID-19, we encourage our guests to send their feedback via e-mail	2	3.6
By filling the guest feedback forms and online reviews	2	3.6
By trip advisor	2	3.6
During check out and via email	2	3.6

Feedback are done according to guest's wishes. if they prefer to give us their views on website or on email there are free do so	2	3.6
Feedback comes through webmail and other social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp.	2	3.6
Feedback sheets are provided in the guest's rooms	2	3.6
Guests always give us feedback on the forms we provide in the rooms	2	3.6
Guests feedback are filled out during check out on the feedback sheets	2	3.6
Guests provides their feedback via email as well as verbal ones when there are interacting with the guest relations	2	3.6
Our guests are always welcome to provide their feedback on our hotel website and fill out the hotel feedback sheet	2	3.6
Our guests provide their feedback on our online platforms	2	3.6
Over the internet especially on the social media and placing feedback sheets in the rooms	2	3.6
Public relations officer is dedicated for the follow up of the guest departure to ask about their stay and get feedback. Yes , unhappy clients reviews on social media	2	3.6
Through social media platforms and websites	2	3.6
We encourage our guests to leave us their feedback, upon check-out via their email addresses.	2	3.6
We encourage the guest to visit our website and give us his views	2	3.6
We get guest's feedback during checkout	2	3.6
We get guest's feedback on our social media and sometimes others prefer to send us an email	2	3.6
We give forms, and we get them through trip advisor	2	3.6
We have suggestion box and we use social media	2	3.6
We provide the feedback sheet in their rooms and they provide the feedback on email	2	3.6
We request every guest to fill out our feedback sheet during checkout	2	3.6
We use internet, emails, social media	2	3.6
When guests leave, the front desk team asks to share some of their stay experience. We also have online platforms where customers share their reviews.	2	3.6
When the guest checks out, we provide a feedback sheet and we encourage others to send via on hotel email	2	3.6
Total	56	100.0

Source: Primary Data (2021)

The results in Table 5 indicate that social media networks are commonly used during advertisement and marketing of hotels' products online. Approximately 39.6% of the respondents indicate that upmarket hotels use these platforms to get feedback and online reviews from their customers. However, about 53.2% of the respondents indicate that upmarket hotels have other means to collect feedback from customers especially during checkout where customers fill in feedback forms or through hotel websites and e-mails to provide their experience during their stay. Findings of the study further revealed that 7.2% upmarket hotels use trip advisor platform as a means of marketing their products and services as well as getting feedback and reviews from customers. In line with specific objective 3, the study identified that the most popular social networks used are Instagram, Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp with no upmarket hotel relying on a single social media network. They rely on a range of social media networks to attract customers and also use the same platforms to receive feedback and reviews from their guests. The results are consistent with the finding of Sabanaeva (2017) who identified that social media networks such as Facebook and twitter were leading among the most used platforms adding that new social media networks were likely to emerge over time.

4.4 Summary of Findings

In this section, the paper presents a summary of the findings on each study objective by putting into consideration the frequency on how respondents responded on the impact of social media usage to the performance of the upmarket hotels based in Kigali.

4.4.1 Impact of Social Media Network Usage on the Performance of Selected Upmarket Hotels

The first objective of the study was to assess the impact of social media network usage on the performance of selected upmarket hotels in Kigali-Rwanda and overall, respondents indicated that social media is important for marketing their services and reaching out to their clients. 96.4% of the respondents indicated that social media usage has had a very big impact on the performance of their hotels. The remainder which makes 3.6% of the respondents indicated that social media has had a small impact on their hotels. All respondents agreed with the closed questions indicating how all upmarket hotels consider using social media networks in their daily operations and marketing of their products.

4.4.2 Social Media Usage by Selected Upmarket Hotels to reach out to their customers

On the second objective to assess how hotels use social media networks to reach out to their customers in the selected upmarket in Rwanda, some respondents indicate that majority of their guests use social media platforms to inquire about their food & beverage services. While other services such as guest rooms and conference service-related inquiries usually are channeled through hotel websites or in-person. Some respondents indicate that about 96.4% of their clients used social media platforms to make bookings while the least indicate that at least 10% used social media networks.

4.4.3 Popular Social Media Networks Used

In line with objective 3 to identify the most popular social media networks used by the selected up-market hotels, the results indicate that 39.6% of the respondents indicate that upmarket hotels rely on social media networks to attract customers and also use the same platforms to receive feedback from their guests. About 53.2% of the respondents indicate that upmarket hotels have other means to collect feedback from customers especially during checkout where customers fill in feedback forms or through hotel websites and e-mails to provide their

experience during their stay with approximately 7.2% using trip advisor platform. The most popular social networks used are Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and WhatsApp with all social media networks considered important to reach out to hotel customers.

5.0 Conclusion

As technology continues to advance, equally people are adopting easy ways of doing business. In the hospitality industry, Hotels have adopted ways to improve the performance of their hotels through social media networks. Various upmarket hotels utilize social media platforms to help tourists in making their travel plan arrangements before they decide on their destinations. In this paper it was found out that all the upmarket hotels in Kigali rely on social media usage to attract customers and use them for marketing of their products. The majority which approximately 96.4% agree that use of social media has improved the performance of hotels in general. On the second objective to assess how hotels, use social media networks to reach out to their customers in the selected upmarket in Rwanda, some respondents indicate that about 96.4% of their clients used social media platforms to make bookings while the least indicate that at least 3.6% respondents indicate that the number of guests received from social media platforms went down since the year 2020.

It was also found that none of the selected upmarket hotels rely on a single social media platform. They most commonly used platforms include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and Twitter. Overall, the usage of social media networks helps the upmarket hotels in a number of ways ranging from bookings, marketing and promotion of the hotel brand. Thus, the paper highlights that upmarket hotel in Kigali, Rwanda have adopted social media usage to improve their performance, attract customers, and promote their brand. The majority of hotels surveyed (96.4%) agree that social media has had a positive impact on their performance. The study also found that most customers (96.4%) used social media to make bookings, indicating the importance of social media in the hospitality industry. None of the selected upmarket hotels relied on a single social media platform, with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp being the most commonly used platforms. Overall, the paper underscores the need for hotels to embrace social media and use it effectively to remain competitive in the hospitality industry.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommends that hotels collect and keep records of their customers indicating which mode of communication they use while making bookings. These records must indicate which uses social media to access various hotel services. This would help hotels to know which platform to emphasize depending on the economic impact it has contributed to the growth of a hotel. In addition, it is essential to consistently update the content on social media platforms regarding products and services offered by hotels. Lack of accuracy of information provided by social media may mislead guests and consequently lower the credibility of certain establishments. Also, hotels should ensure that they have appropriate staff with IT skills to operate and manage social media networks, including using them to get reviews for future improvement of their services. Although the study found no cybercrime cases through social media, hotels have to use platforms securely to ensure trust, honesty and trustworthiness and build customer confidence. The hotels should continue investing in social media to attract customers and promote their brands. Hotels should ensure a presence on multiple social media platforms to reach a wider audience. Hotels should use social media effectively to showcase their facilities, services, and amenities to potential customers. Besides, hotels should consider training their staff on effectively using social media for customer engagement and service

delivery. Finally, hotels should continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of social media usage on their performance to identify areas for improvement and optimize their social media strategy.

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