

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree
in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

OPTIMISING DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA TOUCHPOINTS FOR DIRECT BOOKINGS
IN CITY-BASED LEISURE HOTELS: A MULTI-CASE ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY FOR
WESTMONT HOSPITALITY GROUP – HOLIDAY INN AMSTERDAM ARENA TOWERS

Carolina Breia Filipe Cabrita

Work Project carried out under the supervision of:

Bruno Horta Soares

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Abstract

Digitalisation and social media have transformed how guests search, evaluate and book hotels, making digital touchpoints central to visibility, trust and booking behaviour. This project examines how a major hotel group can optimise these touchpoints along the guest journey to increase direct bookings across city-based leisure properties. Using a multi-case consulting approach, four European hotels were analysed through semi-structured interviews, internal documents and an adapted social media maturity framework. Findings reveal fragmented practices and limited journey integration. The study demonstrates how a maturity-based diagnosis can be translated into prioritised, transversal journey-aligned recommendations and a phased roadmap for consistent, decision-oriented execution.

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Keywords: Direct Bookings, Digital Touchpoints, Customer Journey, Social Media Maturity, Revenue Optimisation, Hospitality Marketing, Online Travel Agencies, City-Leisure Hotels, Consulting Approach.

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1. Introduction

This rapid digitalisation in hospitality has reshaped how guests find, evaluate, and book hotels, with digital and social media now playing a central role in shaping expectations, reputation, and booking behaviour across the guest journey ([Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017](#); [Leung, Law, Hoof and Buhalis, 2013](#); [Hudson, Huang, Roth and Madden, 2016](#)). In this context, Westmont Hospitality Group (WHG), one of the world's largest privately held hotel owners and operators, recognises the need to strengthen its social and digital presence to increase visibility, deepen guest engagement, and drive direct bookings across its portfolio ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). Yet WHG currently lacks tools to assess whether social media activities translate into measurable business results, with leadership acknowledging a gap between digital potential and day-to-day practice. This work project responds to that challenge by proposing the following research question: *"How can Westmont Hospitality Group's city-based leisure hotels optimise their digital and social media touchpoints to increase direct bookings?"*. Developed as a collaborative work project with WHG as the partnering organisation and carried out in coordination with the Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Revenue for Europe, this study focuses on a pre-defined segment of four city-based leisure hotels within the group's European portfolio: The Welbeck Hotel London (TWHL), Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel (PMOAH), Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers (HIAAT), and Hilton Düsseldorf (HD). These were purposefully selected for their contrasting performance profiles and management structures, constituting a multi-case sample that is contextually comparable while allowing for meaningful variation ([Eisenhardt, 1989](#)). The project follows a consulting approach that combines individual and collective contributions. Each of the four case-study chapters offers an in-depth, hotel-specific analysis of social media and digital touchpoints using an adapted Social Media Maturity (SMM) framework, supported by semi-structured interviews, internal documents, and desk research. These individual diagnoses then feed into a collaborative cross-case analysis that benchmarks higher- and lower-maturity hotels within WHG, identifies

capability gaps, and develops a transversal set of recommendations. Although hospitality research has explored social media and digital touchpoints, the core contribution of this project is to translate fragmented hotel-level practices into a prioritised, journey-aligned set of recommendations and an implementation roadmap that WHG can use to guide consistent execution and drive direct bookings across its European city-based leisure portfolio.

1.1 Problem Statement

WHG has focused its strategy on operational efficiency and value-add opportunities, ensuring alignment of stakeholders' interests to achieve major returns ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). However, in an increasingly digitalised hospitality context ([Belias, Rossidis, Ntalakos and Trihas, 2023](#)), this approach has revealed significant gaps in digital marketing and social media management. Despite the group's experience in managing a broad portfolio of hotels ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)), the group itself acknowledges the lack of a structured social media presence, highlighting missed opportunities to foster customer engagement and increase direct bookings.

Although some of the group's hotels already have or are developing a social media management plan, practices remain scattered, reactive, and heavily dependent on individual brand management structures. This inconsistency obstructs the group's ability to leverage digital and social media touchpoints throughout the customer journey, from awareness and research to booking and post-stay advocacy. At the same time, hotels that actively engage guests through authentic digital storytelling, user-generated content (UGC), and seamless online booking experiences are favoured by recent industry trends and consumer behaviours ([Mohammad, Elshaer, Azazz, Kooli, Algezawy and Fayyad, 2024](#)). Therefore, WHG's growing interest in strengthening its social media presence reflects both an internal acknowledgement of missed opportunities and external pressure from customers to remain competitive in a market where digital engagement directly influences brand visibility, loyalty, and profitability ([Camilleri,](#)

[2018](#)). Thus, the main problem addressed in this project is the absence of a cohesive, group-level approach to social media and digital marketing, leading to inconsistent execution and missed opportunities to drive direct bookings along key digital touchpoints. The objective of this study is then to minimise this gap by assessing current practices and identifying key areas for improvement across WHG's European city-based leisure properties.

1.2 Relevance of Study

The rapid rise of digital technology in hospitality has transformed how hotels communicate, distribute information, and build relationships with guests ([Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017](#); [Hudson et al., 2016](#)). Social media has become a key channel where travellers form expectations, share experiences, and influence others' decisions ([Leung et al., 2013](#)). As [Leung et al. \(2013\)](#) note, social media is a “mega trend” reshaping the tourism system, by redirecting information flows between travellers and hotels. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Google Reviews allow hotels to interact directly with consumers, affecting brand perception and trust, while competing for visibility against online travel agencies (OTAs) ([Leung et al., 2013](#)). [Hudson et al. \(2016\)](#) show that social interactions build emotional connections that enhance relationship quality, loyalty, and willingness to purchase. In a context where digital word-of-mouth (WOM) and online reputation strongly influence booking behaviour, a hotel's ability to manage its social presence effectively has become a key source of competitive advantage ([Hudson et al., 2016](#)). By focusing on this topic, the present study responds to a pressing industry need: helping WHG understand how to leverage social media strategically and empirically. The analysis contributes academically by extending literature on social media performance in hospitality, and managerially by offering transversal recommendations and an implementation roadmap to guide journey-aligned digital strategies that increase direct bookings.

1.3 Research Objectives and Structure

This research addresses the previously outlined problem, by developing a transversal strategy for WHG's European city-based leisure portfolio that identifies and prioritises the key digital and social touchpoints along the guest journey to drive direct bookings. In applied business research, the research problem is translated into research questions, which guide the design and choice of methods ([Stage and Manning, 2003](#); [Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023](#)). The present research begins with an overview of WHG to contextualise the project within the company's structure, portfolio, and strategic objectives. To build a theoretical foundation aligned with the current state of knowledge ([Bryman, 2016](#)), the research proceeded with a literature review combining academic (e.g., academic books, industry journals, conference papers) and practitioner sources to ensure both a theoretical grounding and managerial relevance. This review mapped existing knowledge on the topics of the role of social media in hospitality, addressing the relationship between OTAs and direct bookings; the position of social media within the guest journey through the mapping of digital touchpoints; the measurement of performance and return on investment (ROI) through engagement and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM); the attribution and application of existing digital and social media maturity frameworks to evaluate organisational capabilities, identify conceptual gaps and define key constructs.

Following the consulting approach nature of this project, four hotels from the same segment were deliberately selected for their contrasting characteristics constituting the project's multi-case sample. The adopted consulting approach follows the methodology taught in the *Tourism and Hospitality Consulting* course of the Master's in Management with the area of expertise in Hospitality & Customer Experience at Nova School of Business and Economics, which all four authors of this project completed (see [Table 1](#)). It was selected as it provides a problem-solving structure that is well-suited to applied and client-based projects, in this case in collaboration

with WHG, ensuring a systematic progression from the current situation to the formulation of actionable strategic recommendations aligned with the client's reality. The consulting approach consists of six phases: (1) Diagnosis (AS-IS), (2) Benchmarking, (3) Gap Analysis, (4) Recommendations (TO-BE), (5) Implementation, and (6) Change Management. This project advances through the first five phases, concluding with an implementation roadmap and a guest journey mapping. The final phase, (6) Change Management, was not developed in depth, as it requires close collaboration with the client to tailor detailed planning, communication, training, and support activities to each property's operational context.

2. Work Project Context

2.1 Westmont Hospitality Group

Founded in 1975 with a single property in North America, today WHG is one of the world's largest privately held hospitality organisations ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). WHG's mission is to be “a leader in hospitality, focusing on delivering superior results for Guests, Associates, Partners and co-investors while adhering to high standards”, establishing a reputation for integrity, reliability, and results in global hotel investment, ownership, and management ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). Through long-standing partnerships with leading international brands, such as Hilton, Marriott, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), Fairmont, Sheraton, and Radisson Hotels, WHG has maintained a diversified portfolio across all major market segments and service levels ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). Today, WHG owns a portfolio of over 500 hotels across North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and has owned, operated or advised over 1,100 properties worldwide. Its portfolio encompasses a wide spectrum of hospitality assets, ranging from economy and limited-service hotels to full-service business and conference properties, boutique hotels, and luxury resorts ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). This diversification reflects WHG's ability to tailor each asset's business model

to its market, brand, and location, maximising performance and ROI for all stakeholders. With offices and operations across four continents, the group continues to expand through strategic acquisitions and partnerships. In Europe specifically, WHG has co-owned and advised more than 250 hotels since 1995, operating mainly under major international franchise brands in key cities, such as London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Prague, as well as in regional locations across the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Italy and The Netherlands ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)). Its organisational culture is founded on five core values: entrepreneurial spirit, ethics, flexibility, family orientation, creativity, and empowerment ([Westmont Hospitality Group, n.d.](#)), which shape the company's management philosophy and guide its relationships with all stakeholders. As a global company focused on continuous expansion, and with the digitalisation of the hospitality industry, WHG recognises the need to strengthen its digital and social media presence.

2.2 Work Project Overview

As stated in the introduction, assessing WHG's digital and social media management at portfolio level required defining a focused sample of hotels for in-depth evaluation. Given the size and scale of the hotel group, operating in more than 500 properties in its European portfolio, the scope was narrowed to city-based leisure hotels within WHG's portfolio. WHG provided a list of ten properties that align with the pre-defined segment, ensuring managerial relevance and data access. The following list constituted the initial sampling frame for case selection: Hilton (4) - Hilton Barcelona; Hilton Düsseldorf; The Westminster London Curio; DoubleTree London Hyde Park; Marriott (1) - Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel; IHG (5) - The Welbeck Hotel London; Crowne Plaza Paris Republique; Crowne Plaza Hamburg City Alster; Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers; Holiday Inn Munich City Centre. Following [Eisenhardt \(1989\)](#)'s seminal framework on theory building from case study research, this project adopts a multi-case analysis to explore how social media management practices influence direct

bookings across European city-based leisure hotels. According to [Eisenhardt \(1989\)](#), theoretical, not statistical, sampling is most appropriate for case study research, as cases are chosen for their potential to replicate, extend, or contrast emerging patterns rather than to statistically represent a population. In this study, WHG's pre-defined list of ten city-based leisure hotels served as the defined population, ensuring contextual consistency in ownership and strategic objectives while reducing variation. Within this population, four hotels were purposefully selected, based on their contrasting performance profiles and management structures. This theoretical sampling enables the identification of cross-case patterns and the exploration of "polar types" ([Eisenhardt, 1989](#)). The inclusion of four cases aligns with Eisenhardt's guidance that four to ten cases typically provide sufficient variation for cross-case comparison without sacrificing analytic depth. This comparative logic strengthens the analytic generalisation and replication logic of emergent insights and provides a solid empirical foundation for formulating actionable recommendations and a transversal social media strategy for WHG's European city-based leisure segment. Case selection proceeded in three steps, confirmed with the WHG-validated frame: hotel brand, marketing management structure (see [Table 2](#)), and geography. First, chain representation was established. Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel was included to ensure Marriott brand coverage and to anchor an internally managed model with dedicated marketing team and resources. Second, marketing management structures, as classified by WHG and summarised in [Table 2](#), guided diversity of governance arrangements. With an internal case already represented by Marriott, the only agency-managed option in the frame was The Welbeck Hotel London by IHG, which was therefore selected to capture an outsourced model. Third, to complete chain and geographic balance, a Hilton property outside the UK was added, leading to Hilton Düsseldorf, and a distinct IHG property in a different market, Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers, was included. This configuration yields a balanced mix of geographies, performance levels, and

management setups, providing exposure to varied contextual conditions that strengthen the development of a transversal strategy across the WHG portfolio.

The four cases selected (see [Table 3](#)) enable benchmarking of best practices, identification of structural constraints, and exploration of improvement opportunities across contrasting governance models and market contexts.

3. Literature Review

3.1 The Role of Social Media in Hospitality: From OTAs to Direct Channels

Conceptual Foundations

City-based leisure hotels are increasingly competing in hybrid distribution ecosystems, where OTAs and hotels' own digital channels coexist ([Bigne, Nicolau and William, 2021](#)). To contextualise this shift, fundamental digital marketing and social media concepts that guide how guests discover, evaluate, and book stays were outlined ([Kumar, 2021](#)). Digital marketing is the use of internet-connected channels, such as search, social media, e-mail, websites, and paid ads, to reach, engage, and convert audiences. It is data-driven and measurable, allowing brands to do segmented targeting, content personalisation, and campaign optimisation in real time to achieve business goals ([Kumar, 2021](#)). [Kaplan and Haenlein \(2010, p. 61\)](#) described social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User-Generated Content”.

Evolution of Distribution and OTA Dynamics

The hospitality industry has always relied on distribution channels to increase bookings and, consequently, revenue, but it has also undergone significant transformation ([Camilleri, 2018](#)). Previously, hotels used traditional channels such as WOM and print advertisements to attract guests ([Kumar, 2024](#)). More recently, hoteliers have understood the advantages of being

integrated in technology-driven distribution channels ([Law, Buhalis, and Cobanoglu, 2014](#)), such as OTAs ([Inversini and Masiero, 2014](#)) and social media ([Camilleri, 2018](#)), and of relying on digital marketing ([Kumar, 2024](#)), with studies indicating it as a key contributor to competitive advantage ([Law et al., 2014](#)). OTAs have reshaped hotel distribution by providing inventory, information and pricing consolidation, which enhance trust and convenience for consumers ([O'Connor, Assaker and El Haddad, 2025](#)). However, they pose challenges to hoteliers who are, as described by [Almeida \(2022, p. 359\)](#), “having trouble making a profit margin (...) as consumers embrace [them]”. While increasing visibility and bookings ([Inversini and Masiero, 2014](#)), they impose high commission rates (15-30%) ([Toh, Raven and DeKay, 2011](#)) and diminished control over pricing and customer relationships ([Jolene, 2023](#); [Raab, Berezan, Christodoulido, Jiang and Shoemaker, 2018](#)). [Stangl, Inversini, and Schegg \(2016\)](#) emphasise that reliance on OTAs varies by hotel type and geography, with independent hotels typically showing higher dependence than chain properties.

Strategic Shift to Direct Digital Channels

In response to these challenges, hotels have been increasingly relying on digital and social media marketing to regain control over bookings and customer engagement ([Kumar, 2024](#)). This includes websites, social media, Search Engine Optimisation, Pay-per-click (PPC), e-mail marketing, and e-marketing strategies, enabling hotels to reach potential guests directly and foster brand loyalty ([Kumar, 2024](#)). Papers indicate that effective social media marketing has a significant impact in a hotel's competitive advantage, once hospitality and tourism organisations can monitor and rectify their destination and brand images in a time and cost saving way ([Law et al., 2014](#)). At an infrastructure level, execution through direct channels relies on Central Reservation Systems (CRS) integrated with Property Management System (PMS) to synchronise availability, rates, and inventory across all channels ([Shun and Hassim, 2021](#)). Although direct bookings are mostly preferable for hoteliers due to no charging of

commissions ([O'Connor et al., 2025](#)), empirical evidence demonstrates a positive correlation between OTAs participation and revenue performance across multiple datasets ([O'Connor et al., 2025](#); [Jolene, 2023](#)). However, hotels aiming to recapture direct bookings must focus on replicating OTA's advantages, such as personalisation, transparency, and frictionless booking processes through their own digital platforms and marketing efforts ([Sun, Law and Hyun, 2024](#)). The increasing use of social media platforms reduces distribution costs and allows guests to book directly on the hotel's website ([Noone, McGuire and Rohlf, 2011](#)). UGC and eWOM, for instance, became reliable sources of information for decision-making ([Camilleri, 2018](#)), and social media marketing enhances brand visibility, fosters trust, and strengthens engagement ([Ibrahim and Aljarah, 2023](#)), providing hotels with opportunities to drive direct bookings ([Mohammad et al., 2024](#)).

Segment Dynamics and Market Trends

Establishing a strong presence on social media, rather than on traditional channels ([Jakala, 2023](#)), enables hotels to share storytelling, create emotional engagement, and differentiate their brand ([Kumar, 2024](#)). When combined with optimised landing pages, direct booking incentives, and targeted campaigns, social media strategies can redirect guests from OTAs to hotel-owned channels ([Morales, 2017](#)). Segment-specific strategies are crucial to align digital marketing investments with market position and operational capacity ([Belias et al., 2023](#)). Luxury hotels prioritise storytelling, branding, and influencer partnerships, while independent properties emphasise localised content and promotions to enhance direct engagement ([Jolene, 2023](#)). Recent trends indicate that while OTAs remain central to online distribution ([O'Connor et al., 2025](#)), hotels are successfully increasing direct bookings through integrated digital strategies, emphasising the importance of aligning marketing efforts with user behaviour insights ([Sun et al., 2024](#)).

Conversion and Tech-Revenue Integration

Exposure on social media platforms can translate into booking intentions when content elicits emotional engagement ([Kumar, 2021](#)) and provides a seamless path to purchase ([Kim and Kim, 2004](#)). Key drivers of conversion include personalised landing pages, limited time offers, and a frictionless booking interface ([Kumar, 2021](#)), allowing hotels to increasingly leverage loyalty programmes, well-positioned websites, meta-search optimisation, and exclusive social media promotions ([Morales, 2017](#)). Integrating digital marketing with revenue management allows hotels to optimise both revenue and direct bookings ([Noone et al., 2011](#); [Toh et al., 2011](#)). Data-driven strategies, including dynamic pricing, targeted digital advertising, and channel management, help hotels control client acquisition costs while maintaining brand integrity ([Belias et al., 2023](#)). Studies have shown that using OTAs as distribution channels can, in fact, be the most effective option for both travellers and hotels ([Stringam and Gerdes, 2021](#)), particularly for independent and small properties. In contradiction, research further indicates that hotels can adopt strategies to reduce or avoid commission costs while achieving comparable reach and visibility ([Morales, 2017](#)).

3.2 Mapping the Customer Journey and Digital Touchpoints in Hospitality

Conceptualising and Defining the Guest Journey

The customer journey frames hospitality experience as a “dynamic process” that unfolds across time and touchpoints rather than a single episode, linking what guests do before, during, and after the stay ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#)). Within this view, the experience is iterative, as previous interactions and external factors influence attention, evaluation, and future engagement or repurchase as guests interact with touchpoints managed by the firm and other consumers ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#)). From the authors’ review of existing definitions, [Følstad and Kvale \(2018\)](#) point out two complementary ways of defining the journey, where some view it as a finite path with a clear beginning and conclusion, while others define it as an

open-ended relationship that evolves from first contact to an “always-a-customer” state, with both perspectives converging on touchpoints as the core units of experience. From a service-design perspective, the customer journey describes how a service is experienced from the guest’s point of view (POV) across different touchpoints ([Følstad and Kvale, 2018](#)). Customer journey mapping (CJM) outlines the sequence of interactions customers have with an organisation, typically structured into three periods: pre-service, service, and post-service ([Rosenbaum, Otalora and Ramírez, 2017](#)). Because journeys are rarely linear, CJM should focus on the few touchpoints most people truly interact with rather than exhaustive lists, which enables targeted improvements where they matter most ([Rosenbaum et al., 2017](#)). The authors also highlight that CJM is widely used by academics and practitioners, because it offers a clear visual of all potential touchpoints across the purchase process, helping organisations understand and improve the experience associated with each interaction.

Social Media’s Influence on the Customer Decision Journey

Social media reshape how travellers search, evaluate, and select hotels by altering information access, perceived value, and the sequence of decisions across journey stages, having greater visible influence when guests move from consideration to booking ([Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017](#)). According to [Gupta \(2019\)](#), social media support core decision tasks in the evaluation stage by helping travellers collect information, assess alternatives, and select a hotel. Beyond these functional tasks, platform functionalities such as identity, information-sharing, and conversation features, together with peer social influence, help explain why social media interactions predict consumer decision-making ([May, Hong and Tiong, 2023](#)). However, the impact depends on who posts and how credible the post appears to the viewer ([Gupta, 2019](#)). Consumers actively consult and share UGC that they perceive as informative and influential, changing what they believe and trust, contrasting with the pre-social media era, and elevating trustworthiness as a key determinant of whether information sways hotel choice ([Varkaris and](#)

[Neuhofer, 2017](#)). From a firm's perspective, hospitality companies increasingly manage social media strategies as planned touchpoints along the journey to inform, engage, and stimulate sharing. However, the increased usage of social media channels complicates monitoring and coordination without an explicit journey strategy that spans pre-purchase, in-stay, and post-purchase interactions ([Hu and Olivieri, 2020](#)). According to [Hu and Olivieri \(2020\)](#), case evidence indicates that the increasing use of social platforms across all journey phases, combined with clear objectives for each touchpoint and recognition that consumer-generated content is often perceived as more reliable than brand communications, amplifies the role of eWOM in hotel decision-making. Influencer content has become a prominent touchpoint, with trust in influencers positively affecting every phase of travel decision-making ([Pop, Săplăcan, Dabija and Alt, 2022](#)). According to [Marriott International \(2023\)](#), partnering with influencers can effectively establish credibility, drive awareness, and bring new brand positioning to life, provided that influencer profiles align with one or more of the brand pillars. Influencers act as opinion leaders whose perceived trustworthiness and content credibility strengthen persuasion and guide expectations that travellers carry into later stages, magnifying their impact beyond initial inspiration on to post-purchase behaviour ([Pop et al. 2022](#)). At the same time, negative influencer content can discourage hotel or destination choice and inhibit revisit intentions, which underscores the importance of active monitoring and timely engagement where these narratives form ([Pop et al., 2022](#)). According to [May et al. \(2023\)](#), trust reduces perceived risk and increases willingness to act on social content, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of social media marketing across journey stages in contexts where travellers rely heavily on digital sources for hotel information. Emotional factors also matter, as differences in capabilities such as self-awareness moderate how strongly social media influences decisions, suggesting that different types of users respond differently to the same content and that marketers should target and adapt along the journey ([May et al., 2023](#)).

Journey Stages and Key Touchpoints

Pre-service. Guests move through need recognition, search, and consideration as they interact with the brand, the category, and the wider context that shapes expectations and risk perceptions ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#)). In tourism, this corresponds to the prospective phase in which value is created through anticipation, so pre-trip content and touchpoints should build confidence and desire in ways that reflect how customers experience the service from their POV ([Yachin, 2018](#); [Følstad and Kvale, 2018](#)). Empirical findings show that OTAs and hotel websites are two of the most powerful touchpoints for influencing decisions and completing reservations in these early stages ([Zabjesky, Barbosa and Neves, 2025](#)). Reliance on discovery channels is segment-specific, as women report higher use of Instagram to identify needs, men rely more on YouTube across multiple stages of decision-making, and younger generations depend more on digital touchpoints overall than older consumers, which suggests stage-specific and audience-aware emphasis rather than an even spread across platforms ([Livas, Skarparis and Skotis, 2022](#)).

Service. During the on-site experience, interactions intensify around choice, ordering, payment, and the service environment, where situational cues influence decision quality and satisfaction, particularly when information load can be high ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#)). This aligns with the active phase in which value is realised through participation, so maps should specify what the guest needs at critical touchpoints and how frontline actions, backstage support, and environmental cues will meet those needs ([Yachin, 2018](#); [Rosenbaum et al., 2017](#)). In practice, the core period includes pre-arrival contact, arrival and welcome, check-in, ongoing reception, housekeeping, food and beverage (F&B) and event services, service recovery and feedback, and check-out, each of which can be supported by appropriate digital and human interfaces ([Antolín, 2024](#)). The author also notes that social media has driven a shift toward real-time sharing, leading consumers to post content while actively using products or services. This

affects the firm's online reputation and makes this service stage a priority for managing the customer experience and journey-critical touchpoints ([Antolín, 2024](#)).

Post-service. The product or service itself becomes a central touchpoint as guests evaluate the experience, request assistance, and engage or repurchase, with reflections shaping the next consideration cycle ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#)). The reflective phase emphasises recollection, where satisfaction and meaning are consolidated, making post-service channels (e.g., reviews, feedback, loyalty communications, guest sharing of content), especially important for seeding the next pre-service stage ([Yachin, 2018](#); [Antolín, 2024](#)). In a study of millennial hotel journeys, [Neves \(2022\)](#) highlights the importance of post-stay touchpoints, showing that the journey continues after check-out, where concise follow-up messages are used to encourage feedback and advocacy.

Designing, Measuring and Managing Digital Touchpoints

Across all three stages, guests interact with multiple touchpoints ([Zomerdijk and Voss, 2010](#)), including interactions with employees, other customers, technologies (e.g., booking engines, apps), intermediaries (e.g., OTAs, social media platforms), and the physical environment. Personalisation adjusts each interaction to individual preferences and needs to create positive cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses, and must be designed in line with the specific touchpoint type and stage ([Weidig, Weippert and Kuehn, 2024](#)). Digitalisation connects touchpoints into a system that enables personalisation, real-time communication, and seamless omnichannel experiences across the guest journey, as long as hotels align their social campaigns, paid content, and channels to match the needs of different traveller types ([Collins, 2023](#)). [Shchetkina and Berman \(2024\)](#) add that personalisation creates value, but only when there is “actionable heterogeneity,” meaning that customer segments respond differently to treatments. Marketers operate in an environment overloaded with messages and fragmented channels (e.g., websites, email, social media, blogging), making it essential to coordinate tactics

and clarify the role each channel plays in supporting consumer needs at each stage of the guest journey ([Livas et al., 2022](#)). [Straker, Wrigley and Rosemann \(2015\)](#) propose a typology of four digital touchpoint types with different purposes, so reliance on each should vary with circumstances, user preferences, and individual characteristics ([Livas et al., 2022](#)). Functional touchpoints are typically one-way communications that provide information, reminders, incentives, and website traffic, while social touchpoints enable two-way interactions and engagement ([Straker et al., 2015](#)). Community touchpoints facilitate content exchange and involvement, whereas corporate touchpoints focus on feedback, support, loyalty, and in-depth company information ([Straker et al., 2015](#)).

3.3 Measuring Social Media Performance and ROI in Hotels

The Challenge of Measuring Social Media ROI

The rise of social media has changed communication and distribution in the hospitality industry, yet managers still struggle to accurately measure its real business impact ([Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010](#)). When defining social media, [Kaplan and Haenlein \(2010\)](#)'s typology included social networking sites, blogs, content communities, collaborative projects, and virtual worlds. The authors consider that each platform allows different behaviours and requires separate success criteria, making a single, uniform ROI calculation impractical for hotels. For example, Facebook may help with awareness and engagement while Google ads aim directly at conversion. [Kaplan and Haenlein \(2010\)](#) also highlight the dual nature of social media. The media aspect can be assessed through traditional metrics like impressions, reach, or click-through rate (CTR), however, the social aspect, which includes building relationships, co-creation, trust, and advocacy, is not easily measured with numbers. Therefore, any attempt to measure ROI should combine both tangible and intangible results, mixing financial and relational indicators throughout the customer journey ([Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010](#)). [Buhalis and Mamalakis \(2014\)](#) address this complexity in one of the few hospitality-specific ROI

frameworks. The author's case study of the Princess Andriana Hotel in Rhodes combines data from five channels to evaluate financial returns, reflected in hard metrics (e.g., cost per acquisition (CPA), return on advertising spend (ROAS), conversions, booking volume), and non-financial returns, captured through soft metrics (e.g., engagement, reach, brand sentiment). The findings indicate that strong engagement and positive online reputation often lead to significant increases in occupancy and revenue, showing that engagement is a leading indicator of future performance.

Engagement Metrics and Business Outcomes

If ROI measurement defines what should be evaluated, engagement determines how value is created ([Hudson et al., 2016](#)). The authors demonstrate that when consumers interact with hotel brands on social media through likes, shares, or comments, they perceive a higher quality in the consumer-brand relationship. Engagement is highlighted as building trust, intimacy, and self-connection, which leads to loyalty and positive WOM, showing that engagement is not just about behaviour, it is emotional. The more human and responsive a brand is perceived online, the better the relationship with its customers ([Hudson et al., 2016](#)). [Yost, Zhang and Qi \(2021\)](#) support this idea with evidence linking engagement to sales performance. By studying a hospitality organisation's digital posts, it was found that higher engagement rates directly correlated with product sale increase. The type of post, timing, and hashtag strategy significantly influenced engagement outcomes, giving managers practical tools to impact revenue. This study also links digital interaction metrics with financial results, connecting social behaviour with business performance. However, [Diab \(2023\)](#) cautions that not all engagement metrics carry strategic importance, and many organisations focus too much on vanity metrics, such as follower counts or superficial likes. [Diab \(2023\)](#)'s analysis suggests combining engagement data with broader key performance indicators (KPIs), such as CPA, ROAS, and conversion rate (CVR), to evaluate whether engagement contributes to profitability.

[Diab \(2023\)](#) views engagement as a leading indicator rather than a final goal, stressing the importance of tracking it over time instead of just during campaigns. [Yoon and Sims \(2013\)](#) expand engagement measurement into customer relationship management (CRM), through the Social CRM framework. The authors suggest integrating social media data into CRM systems to handle customer acquisition, retention, and advocacy. Metrics such as interaction frequency, referral activity, and sentiment contribute to lifetime value models, turning engagement into a relational asset instead of a marketing measure ([Yoon and Sims, 2013](#)). When connected to transactional data, social engagement highlights both the strength of customer relationships and their economic value ([Yoon and Sims, 2013](#)).

UGC, eWOM, and Online Reviews as Performance Drivers

[Cantallops and Salvi \(2014\)](#) reviewed early literature and found differences between factors that generate reviews (e.g., satisfaction, altruism, complaint motives) and the impacts of eWOM on trust, purchase intention, and loyalty. The authors' analysis shows that online reviews serve as both causes and effects of service quality perceptions, where positive reviews build credibility, while negative ones reduce bookings and harm brand equity, making eWOM and UGC acts as a measurable indicator of customer satisfaction. [Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan \(2018\)](#) revisit eWOM a decade later, illustrating how mobile communication and multiple platforms have made reviews an essential part of the travel experience. The authors note that the lines between social media and formal review sites have blurred, as travellers now discuss and rate experiences online, for example, on TripAdvisor. Effective reputation management now requires ongoing two-way communication, responding to feedback, encouraging positive stories, and using online conversations to improve service ([Litvin et al. 2018](#)). [Xiang, Du, Ma and Fan \(2017\)](#) tackle the challenges of using online reviews as performance data. The authors analysis of TripAdvisor, Expedia, and Yelp shows significant differences in sentiment intensity and rating distribution across platforms, warning against simple aggregation. [Xiang et al.](#)

(2017)'s analysis recommends using multiple sources for analysis and focusing on data validity, quality, consistency, and representativeness of review content before linking it to performance outcomes. The financial impacts are quantified by [Viglia, Minazzi, and Buhalis \(2016\)](#), who studied 346 hotels in Rome to see how review attributes impact occupancy. A one-point increase in average rating led to a 7.5 percentage-point rise in occupancy rate, confirming that online reputation has a direct impact on revenue. The number of reviews had a positive effect, but the returns diminished once a certain amount of feedback was reached. The findings show that eWOM influences perception and converts into measurable revenue outcomes ([Viglia et al., 2016](#)). In addition, UGC, particularly traveller photos shared on social media, has become a key source of insight for tourism research and practice ([Li, Zhang and Hsu, 2023](#)). These images provide genuine real-time views of destinations, capturing emotions that words alone cannot convey, and they are processed quickly and intuitively by viewers, strongly influencing expectations and decision-making. Consequently, UGC not only reflects perceived service quality but also serves as a valuable tool for studying visitor preferences, behaviours, and emerging trends ([Li et al., 2023](#)).

Integrating Social Media Metrics Across the Customer Journey

Measuring social media performance effectively requires connecting metrics such as ROI, engagement, and reputation across the guest journey ([Leung et al., 2013](#)). According to [Leung et al. \(2013\)](#), in the pre-trip phase, social media generates awareness and inspiration through visual storytelling and reviews, with key indicators including reach, impressions and referral traffic. The during-trip phase focuses on interaction and UGC, measured by engagement rate, tagged posts, and real-time mentions. The post-trip phase centres on reviews and advocacy, assessed through sentiment, average rating, response rate, and how recent the reviews are. [Leung et al. \(2013\)](#) also highlights that managing feedback loops across these stages strengthens reputation and encourages repeat bookings. [Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, and Zhang](#)

[\(2013\)](#) offer a related model called the Social CRM House, which integrates social media engagement into the customer lifecycle stages of acquisition, retention, and termination. Acquisition relies on exposure metrics such as reach, CTR, and follower growth, while retention depends on engagement depth, loyalty programme participation, and customer lifetime value. Termination can be predicted through declining sentiment or reduced activity. The authors also expand the valuation framework to include customer influence value and customer referral value, capturing the impact of socially connected customers who sway their peers through advocacy. While integrating social media metrics with the guest journey offers a strategic view, accurately measuring ROI relies on strong analytical and experimental methods ([Malthouse et al., 2013](#)). [Kohavi and Longbotham \(2023\)](#) highlight online controlled experiments, or A/B tests, as the best way to establish causality in digital settings. By presenting different audiences with various content versions and tracking performance using a set Overall Evaluation Criterion, hotels can measure the specific impact of campaigns, creative content, or offers on conversions and bookings. [Istanbulluoglu \(2017\)](#) shows that the speed of social media responses directly influences customer satisfaction and advocacy. Customers expect replies within about three hours on Twitter and within six hours on Facebook, showing that formal first-response and resolution time targets represents a measurable standard for social media management. [Anderson and Cheng \(2017\)](#) suggest using multi-click attribution models for hospitality advertising, explaining that relying solely on first-click or last-click attribution misrepresents performance evaluation by overlooking intermediate “assist” interactions. Multi-touch attribution, supported by tools like Google Analytics 4 (GA4) and booking engine (BE) data, helps hotels capture the complete decision path from awareness to purchase. Finally, analytical tools close the ROI measurement loop. Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) values are used to track the effectiveness of online marketing campaigns by identifying which journeys are driving traffic and conversions ([Microsoft, 2025](#)). According to [Michigan Technology](#)

[University \(n.d.\)](#), these parameters are appended to uniform resource locators (URLs) to specify details (e.g., *utm_campaign*, *utm_source*, *utm_medium*, *utm_content*, *utm_term*), enabling analytics tools to determine where visitors come from and how different marketing efforts perform. When applied consistently across digital channels, they allow marketers to compare campaign performance and understand how users arrive on the website ([Michigan Technological University, n.d.](#)). When combined with event tracking in tools such as GA4, these parameters help trace how users move from initial interactions to key actions on the website ([Microsoft, 2025](#)).

3.4 Frameworks for Assessing Digital and Social Media Maturity in Hospitality

Digital and Social Media Maturity

Defining Social Media Maturity (SMM) requires first understanding of digital maturity, as social media is recognised as a key enabler of digital transformation (DT) across industries ([Gökalp and Martinez, 2022](#)) and it is explicitly integrated into broader digital maturity development phases ([Ka, Ying and Tang, 2023](#)). Digital maturity is defined as a reflection of an organisation's ability to comprehend, apply, and strategically evolve with digital technologies ([Ka et al., 2023](#)). [Aslanova and Kulichkina \(2020\)](#) further describe it as an organisation's ability to transform using digital technologies in a consistent and sustainable way across five dimensions: strategy, culture, organisation, technology, and customer experience. [Mettler \(2009\)](#) states that other authors frame maturity models as progression, and the extent to which an organisation has mastered relevant digital capabilities in three key domains: process, object, and people. Maturity is seen not just as technological adoption, but as process refinement and people enablement ([Mettler, 2009](#)). Digital maturity models have been defined as methods for measuring an organisation's current state of DT, technology adoption, strategy, and process implementation ([Haryanti, Rakhmawati and Subriadi, 2023](#)). Within the hospitality context, [Ka et al. \(2023\)](#) proposes a more tailored definition, stating that digital maturity is seen through

two lenses: DT readiness and DT intensity. Readiness includes digital literacy, organisational alignment, and access to relevant technologies, while intensity refers to how deeply digital practices are embedded into core business processes ([Ka et al., 2023](#)). The authors also note that “The digital maturity of high-touch service industries, such as hospitality enterprises, that face obstacles to DT, has not been researched as extensively as manufacturing and low-touch service companies” ([Ka et al., 2023, p.2](#)). [Thomas and Woodside \(2016\)](#) connect SMM to the concept of social intelligence, describing it as the ability to integrate customer data from social platforms to drive responsive and personalised engagement ([Stone and Woodcock, 2013](#)). [Geyer and Krumay \(2015\)](#) emphasise that for an organisation to evaluate its SMM, top management must first develop digital fluency and personal familiarity with social tools. [Bose \(2023\)](#) defines SMM as “the level of sophistication in a company’s social media strategies and practices,” including governance, process integration, technology adoption, and cross-functional collaboration. [Geyer and Krumay \(2015\)](#) highlight the absence of a consistent and adequate approach for assessing SMM across organisations but conceptualise SMM as a staged progression where companies move through five levels, based on how effectively they integrate and leverage social media to support strategic goals.

Existing Frameworks

Ten frameworks and models were reviewed to assess digital and SMM (see [Table 5](#)). Given the limited academic research on SMM, the review was extended to practitioner literature, where numerous complex models, often tied to service promotion, reflect both practical interest and business potential in this area. [Gökalp and Martinez \(2022\)](#) introduce the Digital Transformation Capability Maturity Model (DX-CMM), grounded in a well-established process capability maturity model. It was designed in response to a review of 18 digital maturity models, which found that most were focused on the manufacturing industry, lacked theoretical foundations, excluded the dimensions of governance and workforce, and offered limited

practical directions. The DX-CMM enables a structured analysis of gaps and the development of a roadmap, assessing 26 processes across four dimensions. It defines six levels of maturity, from Level 0 (Incomplete) to Level 5 (Innovative), applicable to all industries and standardised evaluation criteria. Social media is recognised among the enabling technologies of DT, it is not explicitly present as a dimension within this framework. The Extended Digital Maturity Model (DX-SAMM) by [Haryanti et al. \(2023\)](#) presents a framework for measuring DT maturity. After analysing 44 existing models, the model addresses gaps such as high costs, reliance on external consultants, industry specificity, and limited coverage of key organisational and human dimensions. DX-SAMM assesses seven interrelated dimensions, such as organization and structure, strategy, customer and culture, using 6 levels of maturity from Level 0 (Incomplete) to Level 5 (Optimizing). The model is designed for broad cross-industry applicability and validated through case studies, but it does not explicitly include social media as a maturity dimension. [Ka et al. \(2023\)](#) propose a conceptual model for developing digital maturity model tailored for micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the hospitality sector. Developed through qualitative analysis including in-depth interviews and industry reports, this model addresses gaps in existing maturity frameworks, focused on large companies or manufacturing industries, often neglecting small service-oriented businesses such as MSEs in the hospitality sector. The model has four core dimensions: Strategy and Organization, Technology, focusing on accessible platforms such as PMS, online booking, and social media channels, Digital Capabilities and Integrated Business. It is designed for the unique context of the hotel industry, highlighting the high level of human contact and the experiential nature of this sector. Social media and content platforms are explicitly integrated, acknowledging their strategic role in marketing, customer engagement, and brand development within hospitality MSEs. The IDC Maturity Scope: Future Enterprise 1.0 ([IDC, 2019](#)) model is a comprehensive DT maturity framework aimed at guiding organisations through scaling digital capabilities across five

interrelated dimensions. The model categorises maturity into five progressive stages, from Ad Hoc (1) to Optimized (5), applicable broadly across industries. The model provides practical guidance for enterprises aiming to innovate digitally at scale, but social media is not explicitly as a core element. [Thomas and Woodside \(2016\)](#) propose a Social Media Maturity Model specifically for healthcare organisations to assess and improve their social media capabilities. It fills the gap left by generic models by focusing on healthcare's unique needs. The model evaluates four key components: Content and Community, Integration, and Coherence and guides organisations through four maturity phases. While social media is central to this model, it is tailored explicitly for the healthcare industry. [Jussila, Kärkkäinen and Lyytikä \(2011\)](#) propose a Social Media Adoption Maturity Model tailored to innovation setting and business-to-business (B2B) contexts, addressing limitations in maturity adoption models that don't tackle barriers of social media adoption in innovation processes. It was built from case studies interviews, and experts' input. The model outlines five dimensions, such as social media practices and necessary skills and competences and five maturity levels, ranging from Ad Hoc (1) to Fully Mature (5). While it is designed for a specific industry, the model centres on social media as a managerial and organisational challenge. [Moi and Cabiddu \(2021\)](#) introduce the Agile Marketing Capability Maturity Framework a maturity model developed to assess and guide the development of agile marketing capabilities, particularly within the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism industry. It was created to fill the gap in systematic academic studies on agile marketing approaches, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative digital and social media analysis. The model evaluates four dimensions: customer-oriented responsiveness, high flexibility, human collaboration, and quick continuous improvement, structured across four maturity levels from Initial Agility (1) to Proactive Agility (4). Social media is integrated within critical enablers and indicators of maturity, reflecting its role in communication with customers. The [BCG and Google \(2019\)](#)

present the Digital Marketing Maturity Model, developed from a comprehensive study of over 180 brands across 10 industries in the Asia Pacific region. This model responds to observed gaps in digital marketing maturity, including limited first-party data integration, lack of executive sponsorship, and insufficient agile working methods. It provides a roadmap through four maturity stages, assessing capabilities in data strategy, audience targeting, content creation, media execution, measurement, and organisational collaboration. The model is broadly applicable across multiple industries such as travel & leisure, education & training, retail, financial services, healthcare, and others. The model is aimed at guiding brands to unlock commercial benefits by fostering integrated, data-driven, and agile digital marketing practices.

[Chaffey and Cooper \(n.d.\)](#) from Smart Insights developed a practitioner digital marketing maturity audit template based on the Carnegie Mellon Capability Maturity Model, using a five stage scale ranging from Initial (1) to Optimized (5), with a clear focus on digital marketing and service performance to assess digital and social media capabilities. Although it offers a detailed evaluation structure, it lacks actionable guidance and may be overly complex. Its commercial intent may also reduce its usefulness as a standalone tool. The IDC Maturity Scape: Social Media Management 1.0 ([IDC, 2018](#)) provides a structured framework for assessing and improving social media capabilities across five maturity stages: (1) Ad Hoc, (2) Opportunistic, (3) Repeatable, (4) Managed, and (5) Optimized. It assesses progress across four dimensions: Vision, People, Technology, and Process, covering aspects such as strategy, governance, listening, engagement, and measuring success. The model emphasises leadership involvement, departments collaboration, and the integration of tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots to increase engagement. While not specific to the hospitality industry, it provides practical guidance for evolving from fragmented efforts to fully integrated social media strategies across the entire business. Its practical guidance highlights social media as a communication function and a driver of broader DT.

4. Methodology

4.1 Social Media Maturity Assessment Framework

To obtain a quantitative and comparable diagnosis of the four WHG hotels and to initiate the first phase of the consulting approach (see [Table 1](#)), a maturity model was adopted as the diagnostic tool underpinning the AS-IS assessment and enabling structured benchmarking and gap analysis in subsequent phases. This approach was introduced in the *Digital Transformation in Hospitality* master's course completed by all four authors and applied under the guidance of the thesis advisor.

In the literature review, ten academic and practitioner frameworks were analysed (see [Table 5](#)) to assess whether an existing model could be applied to evaluate the SMM of the four WHG hotels. Research showed that, although there are many digital and SMM models, few have an academic basis and are usable in terms of management and even fewer are designed for hospitality. Recent work also notes that research on digital maturity in high-touch services, such as hospitality, lags behind manufacturing and other low-touch services. Hospitality has an experience-oriented nature, and the need to balance efficiency with the guest experience makes direct transfers from other sectors problematic ([Ka et al., 2023](#)). This underscores that hospitality is a high-touch, experience-driven domain with specific requirements for assessing digital and SMM. Generic models often overlook the momentum of the guest journey and the reputation effects driven by reviews, which are key aspects of the industry.

Most of the models analysed (see [Table 5](#)) are either generic, for example, the IDC Future Enterprise and DX-CMM ([Gökalp and Martinez, 2022](#)), specific to a sector, MICE tourism or healthcare ([Moi and Cabiddu, 2021](#); [Thomas and Woodside, 2016](#)), or even intended for MSEs ([Ka et al., 2023](#)), limiting their relevance for a multi-brand group such as WHG. In addition, industry practitioner models ([Chaffey and Cooper, n.d.](#)) are presented in a highly complex format often followed by consulting offerings and sales-oriented content, making them less

suitable for independent academic evaluation. To evaluate the SMM and management practices of the four selected hotels, an adapted framework was designed and applied. The chosen structure was based on IDC Maturity Scape: Social Media Management 1.0 ([IDC, 2018](#)), facilitated by the project advisor and professor of the *Digital Transformation in Hospitality* course, who granted us access, as it is not publicly available online. A new model was not developed, as this was outside the project scope and would add unnecessary design and validation effort, adapting a proven framework ensured rigor, comparability, and practicality. The framework logic was adopted in terms of dimensions, subdimensions, and maturity levels, as this configuration was also consistently observed in most of the frameworks analysed in the literature review, which supports comparability and face validity for a maturity assessment. In the review, for example, IDC's Future Enterprise 1.0 has explicitly five maturity levels, and [Jussila et al. \(2011\)](#) also use a five-level scale ("Ad Hoc" to "Fully Mature"), while other models span 1-7 levels, but follow the same staged logic of capability progression.

An assessment tool was created using Excel to implement the framework (see [Figure 3](#)), enabling systematic assessment and automatic calculation of results. This framework comprises six dimensions and five maturity levels: Level 1 - Ad Hoc (L1), Level 2 - Opportunistic (L2), Level 3 - Repeatable (L3), Level 4 - Managed (L4), Level 5 - Optimised (L5).

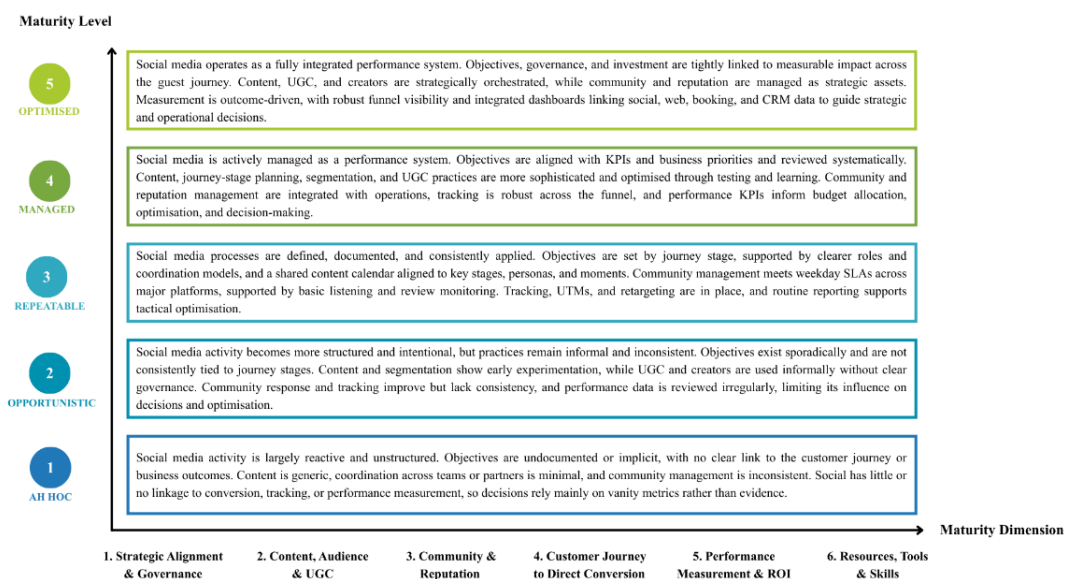


Figure 1: Social media maturity framework (self-elaboration)

Each dimension is further divided into sub-dimensions assessed through structured questions that capture the key elements of effective social media management, such as planning, consistency, audience analysis, monitoring, and data-driven evaluation. The structure allows for a layered analysis. Each sub-dimension is assigned a maturity level from 1 to 5, averaged to obtain a dimension score and level, and then aggregated to calculate the overall maturity score and level based on the average of the dimension results. This allows for detailed interpretation and overall cross-case comparison, positioning each hotel at a corresponding maturity level, accompanied by a detailed qualitative profile. Dimension scores were also averaged across the four case hotels to derive an indicative WHG portfolio-level maturity score. The selection of dimensions, sub-dimensions, pre-defined questions and level descriptors to reflect the five maturity stages was grounded in the literature review and tailored to the hospitality sector and work project context, to ensure both academic rigour and practical relevance for WHG.

1. Strategic Alignment & Governance captures leadership commitment, coordination between departments and functions, and clear policy guidance, as digital and social maturity consistently depend on organisational alignment and governance capabilities. ([IDC, 2018](#); [IDC, 2019](#); [Aslanova and Kulichkina, 2020](#); [Ka et al., 2023](#); [Gökalp and Martinez, 2022](#)).

2. Content, Audience & UGC reflects evidence that content tailored to each platform, audience development, and user-generated contributions shape evaluation and choice along the guest journey ([Varkaris and Neuhofer, 2017](#)). UGC is a powerful informational and persuasive driver that managers should actively cultivate ([Camilleri, 2018](#)).

3. Community & Reputation is constantly referred to as a key driver of performance. It requires continuous monitoring and management. For this reason, it places strong emphasis on two-way communication and active review management ([Litvin et al., 2018](#); [Xiang et al., 2017](#); [Viglia et al., 2016](#)). Online reviews function as both causes and effects of service quality perceptions

([Cantallops and Salvi, 2014](#)).

4. *Customer Journey & Direct Conversion* embeds pre-, in, and post-service logic so that social media touchpoints are designed for movement from discovery to booking and advocacy, aligning metrics by stage and channel ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#); [Hu and Olivieri, 2021](#)).

5. *Performance Measurement & ROI* integrates hard and soft indicators (e.g., CPA, ROAS, engagement, sentiment) to capture both media and relational value and to connect social media signals to commercial outcomes across the guest journey ([Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010](#); [Buhalis and Mamalakis, 2014](#); [Malthouse et al., 2013](#)).

6. *Resources, Tools & Skills* assesses people, platforms, and analytical capabilities, underscoring that workforce skills and enabling technology are prerequisites for sustained progress and scale ([IDC, 2018](#); [Geyer and Krumay, 2015](#); [Haryanti et al., 2023](#); [Ka et al., 2023](#)).

4.2 Data Collection

Following the consulting approach (see [section 1.3](#) and [Table 1](#)), a diagnosis of the current state of SMM of the pre-selected sample of four hotels from the WHG was conducted. To access this information and collect primary data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants (see [Table 4](#)) to ensure case comparability through a consistent set of themes, while preserving flexibility for in-depth and contextual insight ([Bryman, 2016](#); [Saunders et al., 2023](#)). These interviews followed the SMM framework adapted from existing models (see [section 4.1](#) and [Figure 3](#)), which was applied consistently across all interviews to support a comparable assessment, with all questions pre-designed. At the same time, the semi-structured format preserved openness for elaboration, allowing informants to discuss practices, challenges, and opportunities that might not emerge in fully structured formats ([Alsaawi, 2014](#); [Bryman, 2016](#)). In addition, after each interview informants were asked to provide supporting documentation to enable data triangulation with secondary data and score validation, specifically materials in the areas of (1) Strategy & Objectives (e.g., social media guidelines), (2) Activity &

-Group Part-

Engagement (e.g., periodic performance reports), (3) Audience & Growth (e.g., platform insights), (4) Content & Campaigns (e.g. content calendars and direct-booking campaigns), (5) Budget (e.g., paid social spend), and (6) ROI & Conversion (e.g., campaign KPIs and channel-mix, booking-share reports).

For analysis purposes, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, but not available in this document due to confidentiality constraints. This material was categorised according to the adapted SMM framework to convert qualitative indicators into consistent scores from 1 to 5 per dimension, sub-dimension, and total for the organisation as a whole, so that this data could be quantified to facilitate comparisons, identify patterns, and support decision-making ([Saunders et al., 2023](#)). Supplementary documents were used to validate statements, refine assumptions, and, where possible, adjust quantitative scores in the SMM Framework, reinforcing the reliability of the assessment.

5. Multi-Case Analysis

5.1 Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers

The Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers (HIAAT) case was developed to understand both how the hotel manages its digital and social media touchpoints in practice and how it fits within the broader multi-case study design. Information was obtained through two semi-structured interviews with The Vincent Hotel Group (TVHG)'s Marketing Executive, Marketing Coordinator, and former Marketing Executive (see [Table 4](#)), following the adapted SMM Framework (see [section 4.1](#)). These insights were complemented by internal confidential documents shared before and after the interviews, including IHG's corporate social marketing guidelines and best practices, TVHG's 2025 marketing plan and HIAAT's performance analysis. In addition, further contextual and operational understanding was gained through a one-month on-site internship at HIAAT, which provided direct exposure to day-to-day marketing activities and social media operations. Collectively, these resources form a comprehensive evidence base for the analysis that follows.

5.1.1 Case-Study Introduction

Property Overview and Location

This case study focuses specifically on the HIAAT, a four-star property located in Amsterdam Southeast. Although the analysis concentrates on the Holiday Inn component, the hotel operates within a dual-brand configuration, as the HIAAT and the Holiday Inn Express Arena Towers are housed within a single building. Together, these two IHG properties have 443 rooms and form a unique combined hospitality offering that serves a broad mix of business and leisure guests. The hotel benefits from a highly strategic location in one of Amsterdam's main business and entertainment districts. Within walking distance are several major venues such as AFAS Live, Ziggo Dome, and Johan Cruijff Arena, the Ajax football stadium. The surrounding area also features an IMAX theatre, as well as a wide variety of shops, restaurants, and services. This combination of attractions drives a continuous inflow of visitors throughout the year and

contributes to the hotel's diverse mix of guest profiles, ranging from corporate travellers to event attendees. Accessibility is one of the property's key strengths. The Bijlmer Arena train and metro station is located 650 metres away and offers direct connections to Amsterdam Central Station, while Schiphol Airport can be reached in approximately ten minutes by car.

The HIAAT itself consists of 120 rooms distributed across seven floors, including two accessible rooms. As four-star property, it offers an intercontinental breakfast, dinner service, and approximately 1,000 square feet of conference and meeting space, representing the largest IHG meeting space in Amsterdam. Guests can dine and socialise throughout the day in the Open Lobby restaurant, which combines eating, drinking, working, meeting, and relaxing in one space. Additional F&B options include the To Go Café, which offers Starbucks products, and 24-hour room service. The hotel also provides a wide range of amenities, including on-site parking with electric charging stations, bicycle rental, a mini gym, and a 24-hour self-service food market located in the Holiday Inn Express. In terms of sustainability, the hotel holds Green Key certification, reflecting its alignment with recognised environmental standards.

Relationship with TVHG, IHG and WHG

The HIAAT operates within a multi-layered ownership, management, and brand structure that shapes both its strategic direction and its daily operations. At the ownership and asset oversight level, the property forms part of WHG's European portfolio. WHG operates primarily through franchise partnerships with major international hotel brands such as IHG, Hilton, and Marriott, which allows its hotels to benefit from strong global distribution systems and internationally recognised brand standards.

At the operating level, the HIAAT is part of TVHG, a Dutch hospitality group owned by WHG with a portfolio of 11 hotels across the Netherlands, including internationally recognised brands such as Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express, and Hampton by Hilton. All hotels operate under franchise agreements with IHG and Hilton, being strategically located in major Dutch cities,

ensuring both accessibility and demand. Seven properties are situated in Amsterdam, while the remaining hotels are distributed across key regional centres including Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht, and Arnhem. Several characteristics distinguish TVHG within the Dutch hospitality market. Its organisational structure combines the advantages of global brand affiliations, such as strong distribution and loyalty reach, with the flexibility of a centralised support office that enables knowledge sharing, streamlined operations, and rapid responses to changing market conditions.

From a brand perspective, the HIAAT operates under the IHG franchise system. IHG is one of the world's largest hotel groups, with a portfolio of approximately 5,500 hotels in nearly 100 countries and a collection of 20 hotel brands covering a wide range of guest needs. From short business stays to leisure travel, family trips, and premium experiences, IHG aims to place guest satisfaction at the centre of the experience, reflected in its positioning of "Great Hotels Guests Love". The strength of IHG's distribution channels, brand visibility, and IHG One Rewards loyalty programme provides franchise hotels such as HIAAT with global reach and a strong competitive foundation.

5.1.2 Context and Operating Snapshot

Competitive Set and Customer Segmentation

The HIAAT operates within a well-defined and highly concentrated competitive environment in Amsterdam Southeast, where several comparable properties target similar guest segments. Its primary competitive set consists of three four-star hotels located within close proximity: Jaz in the City, Courtyard by Marriott Arena Atlas, and Van der Valk Amstel. These hotels share comparable positioning in terms of service level, facilities, and accessibility to the major entertainment and business venues that characterise the district. Their proximity and similar value propositions place them in direct competition with the HIAAT for both leisure and business travellers, particularly those attending concerts, sporting events, and conferences.

Within this competitive context, the hotel attracts a guest mix that combines a strong leisure base with a complementary corporate layer. Data retrieved from January to November of this year, shows that leisure guests represent the dominant segment, driven largely by event-related stays and, alongside this, the hotel also welcomes corporate guests, individual business travellers and organised tour groups. The geographic profile of guests further supports this positioning, showing a predominantly domestic market, with the Netherlands as the main country of origin, supplemented by significant volumes from key international source markets such as the UK and Germany. This blend of domestic and international demand is consistent with Amsterdam's role as both a national leisure destination and a major European hub for events and business travel. These patterns in competition and guest mix have direct implications for the optimisation of digital and social media touchpoints. Leisure guests attending events are more likely to compare nearby properties across OTAs, search engines, and social platforms, while domestic repeat guests and business travellers show higher potential for conversion through direct channels, loyalty programmes, and targeted direct communication.

OTA Dependency and Channel Distribution

Regarding third-party platforms, HIAAT relies substantially on OTAs as a primary distribution channel. From both a revenue and an occupancy perspective, OTAs account for a considerable proportion of total business, representing a substantial share of the hotel's demand base and confirming that intermediary platforms play a dominant role in its commercial performance. Intermediaries such as Booking.com represent an important part of the hotel's OTA-driven business, highlighting both the strength of these platforms in the Amsterdam market and the vulnerability associated with concentrated external dependency. This context underscores the importance of optimising digital touchpoints to strengthen the hotel's own direct bookings channels, with OTA guests, who typically have weaker attachment to the brand, representing a

high potential target audience for conversion strategies through social media, retargeting, and loyalty-driven incentives.

Marketing Governance and Digital Limitations

The marketing governance structure at the HIAAT is shaped by its integration within TVHG and the standards of the IHG brand. Marketing activities and social media channels are coordinated centrally through TVHG's support office, meaning that HIAAT does not have a dedicated internal marketing manager at the property level (see [Table 2](#)). Within this context, social media is not positioned as a major revenue-generating lever for the hotel. The primary objective is to maximise profit, and digital and social media channels are present but not prioritised as core commercial drivers. Although IHG's reporting tools and standardised metrics, followed by all franchise hotels, are described as efficient and reliable, the level of data accessible to HIAAT is limited. As a result, the property operates with a narrower view of digital performance indicators, which restricts flexibility in content creation and reduces its capacity to execute targeted social media strategies that could support higher conversion through direct channels.

5.1.3 Social Presence Overview

Online Platforms and Content Practices

Across social media, the Holiday Inn brand and the HIAAT show very different levels of activity. At brand level, Holiday Inn maintains a strong and well-developed presence, particularly on Instagram, where the brand account has more than 112,000 followers and over 1,300 posts. Content is published regularly and includes campaigns, partnerships, reels, and influencer collaborations, aligning with the [IHG Social Marketing Guide \(2022\)](#) that position Instagram as the primary platform for visual storytelling, inspiration, and engagement (see [Figure 4](#)).

In contrast, HIAAT's property-level visibility on social platforms is limited. The hotel has both a Facebook page and a LinkedIn page, however, the LinkedIn account, with approximately 1,250 followers, showed no consistent activity for several years and there is still no established, regular property-specific content strategy. Only until recently, in December 2025, the page published a new LinkedIn update promoting IHG Meetings and Events, highlighting meeting-planning benefits such as cost savings, charitable donations tied to spend, and enhanced IHG One Rewards Business benefits (see [Figure 5](#)). This indicates an emerging shift toward reactivating property-level communication, even though social media activity continues to be largely centralised at the TVHG level. TVHG's LinkedIn account, with nearly 2,000 followers, focuses mainly on open vacancies and recruitment communication, occasional group-wide seasonal campaigns and internal events (see [Figure 6](#)). Property-specific promotional content appears only during selected moments such as Valentine's Day or Easter (see [Figure 7](#)) or specific hotel updates (see [Figure 8](#)), and TVHG does not use UGC, influencer partnerships, or destination-driven storytelling. This reflects the group's corporate orientation rather than a lifestyle-focused digital strategy tailored to leisure segments. Beyond social platforms, HIAAT's direct online presence relies on the standardised webpage hosted on [IHG \(n.d.\)](#). Although the website integrates hotel packages, IHG One Rewards benefits and general property information, the hotel cannot develop tailored landing pages, local offers, or event-driven campaigns. As a result, its ability to influence direct booking behaviour through owned digital channels is largely determined by brand-level templates rather than local marketing activities.

Social Marketing Guidelines and KPIs

As HIAAT is a franchise property, TVHG is required to align with IHG's brand identity and follow the social media metrics. According to [IHG Social Marketing Guide \(2022\)](#), social media is "integral to the travel experience", influencing guests across the guest journey.

Travellers increasingly rely on digital and social platforms for decision-making, using them to research destinations in advance, build excitement and share plans before travelling, post updates during their stay, and leave reviews or comments after returning home. When used strategically, social media allows hotels to enhance brand awareness, demonstrate value of staying with the brand, and engage with guests in real time. However, HIAAT's current social presence, managed centrally by TVHG, remains predominantly corporate focused, with limited property-specific storytelling, minimal posting frequency, and no active use of platforms such as Instagram for leisure-oriented engagement. This gap is particularly relevant given HIAAT's event-driven demand profile. Concerts, football matches, and large-scale events in Amsterdam Southeast lead to increased online search activity, especially on platforms like Instagram and Facebook where visitors seek nearby accommodation. A more active and timely presence on these channels could position the hotel earlier in the decision-making process and help attract high-intent travellers searching around specific events. The current lack of such activity represents a missed opportunity to reduce OTA dependence and capture demand directly through brand-owned digital touchpoints. As a result, the hotel cannot fully activate or track the KPIs recommended by IHG (e.g., reach, comments, likes, shares, clicks), limiting its ability to optimise engagement or influence direct booking behaviour at the property level.

IHG One Rewards and Guest Engagement

A central component of HIAAT's engagement strategy is its integration into IHG One Rewards, IHG's global loyalty programme. The programme enables guests to become members and accumulate points with every stay, which can be redeemed for reward nights (free stays) or gift vouchers from partner retailers (e.g., IKEA, Mediamarkt, Zalando). The programme includes five membership tiers: Club, Silver, Gold, Platinum, and Diamond. As guests progress through these levels, they gain access to increasingly valuable benefits, including upgrades, welcome amenities, and enhanced earning and redemption opportunities. Non-members and Club

members together represent a significant share of the hotel's demand, indicating that many guests are either not enrolled or remain in the early tiers of the programme. This distribution highlights a clear opportunity to grow the base of enrolled members by using digital touchpoints more strategically, particularly because points are earned only through IHG's direct channels, which encourages repeat guests to book via IHG's website or the app rather than OTAs. Members also receive points for every stay at any IHG hotel worldwide, which reinforces the perceived value of choosing an IHG-affiliated property and encourages repeat use across the portfolio.

The hotel also participates in the Greener Stay initiative, which rewards guests staying a minimum of two nights for opting out of stayover housekeeping services with either 500 IHG One Rewards points, a benefit particularly attractive to members, or a complimentary drink voucher. This initiative reduces environmental impact while simultaneously aligns with guest preferences for both sustainability and rewards-based benefits.

5.1.4 Maturity Assessment AS-IS (SMM Framework)

The maturity assessment of the HIAAT was conducted using the adapted SMM Framework introduced in [section 4.1](#), which evaluates social media organisational capabilities across six dimensions and five maturity levels. Within the reality and scope of this project, the SMM framework converts qualitative evidence from interviews and internal documents into standardised scores at sub-dimension, dimension, and overall level of the hotel. The following section presents the HIAAT's overall maturity position, interprets what this level signifies for the hotel, and then examines each dimension and its underlying sub-dimensions to explain the rationale behind the scores assigned. This provides a structured, evidence-based profile of the hotel's current social media management capabilities and areas for development. HIAAT achieved an overall score of 2.06 out of 5, corresponding to the maturity L2 - Opportunistic (see [Figure 9](#)).

Dimension 1: Strategic Alignment & Governance

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 2.33, which corresponds to Maturity L2 - Opportunistic. In the Objectives by Journey Stage sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2 because marketing and social media objectives exist but remain high level and are not explicitly defined per journey stage or clearly connected to pre-, in- and post-stay tasks. In the Governance & Ownership sub-dimension, the hotel reached L3, as the TVHG marketing plan clearly defines roles and responsibilities between the hotel and the brand, and each planned activity has status, main goal and frequency specified. In the Omnichannel Alignment by Stage sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, as channels are tailored but not fully integrated, and coordination occurs mainly around isolated campaigns (e.g., Valentine's Day campaign linked to the website or LinkedIn posts for IHG promotions), with no systematic cross-channel alignment across the guest journey stages.

Dimension 2: Content, Audience & UGC Fit

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 1.67, which corresponds to Maturity L1 - Ad Hoc. In the Stage-Tailored Storytelling sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, as basic platforms differences exist, but content is not intentionally mapped to journey stages. A general purpose behind posts is present, yet is not clearly linked to pre-, in- or post-stay tasks. In the Persona/Segment Relevance sub-dimension, the hotel also scored 2, since segmentation, while relatively clear in daily practice, remains intuitive rather than based on formal personas or journey needs. Content on LinkedIn and Facebook is mainly oriented toward two broad segments: recruitment on the corporate side and general promotional content for guests. Finally, in the UGC & Creator Practice sub-dimension, the hotel scored 1, as there is no formal UGC programme and no influencer strategy. Given HIAAT's positioning as a corporate-leaning property rather than a lifestyle hotel, the social media goal is to remain simple, efficient, and comfort-oriented rather than to build story-driven and influencer narratives.

Dimension 3: Community & Reputation

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 2.67, which corresponds to Maturity L2 - Opportunistic. In the DM Responsiveness sub-dimension, the hotel scored 1, as there are no specific guidelines or service-level targets for social media DMs. The only explicit benchmark in place relates to email, where the target for response time is 24-48 hours, and this is used informally as a reference rather than as a formal standard for social media. In the Review Response Coverage & SLA sub-dimension, the hotel scored 4, since review management is highly structured. Front-office staff, duty managers and the General Manager share responsibility for responding, performance is routinely tracked through Heartbeat Medallia, and IHG sets clear goals for response rates and timeliness. The IHG Fundamentals scorecard (see [Figure 10](#)) shows that HIAAT achieved 100% response to negative social guest reviews, meeting brand benchmarks in both September and the previous month. Heartbeat Medallia consolidates guest surveys and online reviews (e.g., Tripadvisor, Google, IHG) into a single dashboard, enabling efficient follow-up and monitoring of key service areas, including loyalty recognition, room cleanliness, breakfast quality and problem handling, which together contribute to the overall “guest love” score. In the Listening & Operational Response sub-dimension, the hotel scored 3, as reviews are monitored weekly in an Excel sheet and discussed during daily on-site meetings from Monday to Friday between the General Manager and the managers of operational departments, ensuring that feedback is integrated into ongoing operational decision-making.

Dimension 4: Journey & Direct Conversion

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 1.00, which corresponds to Maturity L1 - Ad Hoc. In the UTM & Deep-Link Hygiene sub-dimension, the hotel scored 1, as social posts either link to the homepage or do not include tracking parameters, and no consistent UTM taxonomy or deep-linking practice is in place. The hotel does not use campaign tracking

because the advanced data packages offered by IHG, which would enable this level of analysis, have not been purchased by TVHG due to their cost across the group's nine IHG hotels. In the Google Analytics/Booking Engine Events sub-dimension, the hotel also scored 1, since GA4 is not instrumented for social sessions and no event-level reporting is available. Although IHG's central reporting tools are efficient and reliable, the property's access to data remains limited. In the Retargeting & Offer Parity sub-dimension, the hotel also scored 1, as the revenue department fully controls pricing and parity, while marketing only communicates general information, such as highlighting that a famous artist is performing in Amsterdam, without promoting specific room prices or linking to tailored offer pages. Social media does not promote price-led propositions, and there is no direct alignment between social content, landing pages and BE offers.

Dimension 5: Performance & ROI

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 2.33, which corresponds to Maturity L2 - Opportunistic. In the KPI Connection to Journey Stage sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, as performance indicators are tracked at channel level, focusing on website metrics and booking-related KPIs, but they are not linked to journey stages and do not include social media specific measures. In the Hard KPI Tracking & Cadence sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, since hard KPIs such as displays in search results, property page views, bookings, CVR, and overall search result positioning can be monitored via Booking.com's ranking dashboard. This dashboard also provides comparative insights against competing properties, an overview of factors influencing the score such as conversion, average daily price, and cancellations, and visibility into how the hotel performs within its competitive set, giving the team access to a broad range of OTA-driven performance indicators. These metrics offer valuable visibility into OTA performance, particularly since part of the Sales & Marketing budget is allocated to Booking.com advertising. However, the data is exported and reviewed without a regular

cadence or integration into a broader dashboard that consolidates social, website, and direct booking indicators. As a result, these metrics do not feed consistently into decision-making or into a structured performance management process. Finally, in the Soft-Hard Link & Decision Use sub-dimension, the hotel scored 3, as qualitative indicators such as event calendar and basic audience categories are used to inform marketing communication and pricing decisions, even if these insights are not derived from social media specifically and are not documented through a formal optimisation process.

Dimension 6: Resources, Tools & Skills

In this dimension, HIAAT achieved an average score of 2.33, which corresponds to Maturity L2 - Opportunistic. In the Tooling & SOPs sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, as social media activity relies mainly on LinkedIn, using IHG's reporting metrics but without a dedicated publishing, listening or analytics tool for social media. In the Roles, Training & Coverage sub-dimension, the hotel scored 3, since roles are clearly specified in the TVHG marketing plan, indicating who is responsible, who executes each activity, and the intended goal (e.g., awareness vs. bookings/revenue). New team members receive internal onboarding within the Marketing department, and, for example, the recently appointed Cluster Marketing Executive was trained on ongoing activities and processes. Finally, in the Brand/Agency Coordination sub-dimension, the hotel scored 2, as IHG's reporting tools provide efficient and reliable performance data and coordination between brand and hotel occurs periodically, but remains focused mainly on sharing reports rather than on unified UTM practices.

5.1.5 Conclusion

Overall, the SMM Framework assessment indicates that HIAAT currently operates at Maturity Level 2 - Opportunistic. This means that the hotel has basic structures, intentions and routines in place, but social media is not yet used strategically across the guest journey. At this level, social media activity is present and often driven by good intentions (e.g., supporting

recruitment, highlighting events, sharing brand-led content), but it remains inconsistent, intuitive, and dependent on individual roles or brand interventions. Objectives are not systematically tied to pre-, in-, or post-stay needs, coordination with the website, CRM, or BE is limited, and hard performance data is either unavailable or used in isolation (e.g., Booking.com KPIs rather than social/direct metrics). Content is produced and published, but without structured stage-based storytelling, explicit persona targeting, or the use of UGC and influencer practices. Review and reputation management stands out as the most mature area, thanks to IHG's Heartbeat Medallia system, with the hotel consistently meeting brand benchmarks for review response rates and timeliness. This demonstrates that when processes and tools are centrally provided, the hotel executes them effectively and consistently. Interview insights reinforce this positioning: the team is aware of the limitations, acknowledges that social media is currently oriented toward corporate segments and promotional posts and openly expresses a desire to invest more in social media, improve content relevance, and expand to additional platforms. The new marketing structure further suggests clear potential for growth and capability development.

Compared with the other three cases in this work project, HIAAT is classified as an underperformer in terms of social media and digital maturity. This diagnostic provides a coherent evidence base for the analysis that follows, namely the benchmarking against higher-maturity hotels (PMOAH and TWHL) and the identification of the most critical gaps. These insights inform recommendations designed to help HIAAT progress from L2 to L3, strengthen its social and digital presence, and optimise digital touchpoints throughout the guest journey in order to maximise direct bookings and revenue.

6. Collaborative Analysis of Individual Findings

6.1 Benchmarking & Gap Analysis

A cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the four hotels by dimension and identify shared patterns and maturity gaps across the portfolio, deriving an indicative WHG portfolio-level maturity score by averaging the four hotels (see [Figure 11](#) and [Table 6](#)). This collective benchmark supports the Benchmarking and Gap Analysis phase, showing how each property relates to higher-maturity cases and where opportunities for improvement emerge.

In Dimension 1, at L5, journey phase objectives explicitly guide budgets and testing, and are regularly reviewed with clear evidence of impact. Governance is fully integrated, with executive oversight, a documented playbook, staff training, and periodic audits ensuring compliance and continuous improvement. Social, paid, CRM, and OTA touchpoints are orchestrated in an integrated manner, with social media triggering lifecycle journeys and ensuring rate parity and brand control. TWHL already operates with stable governance connecting hotel leadership, IHG and agencies, and embeds journey-oriented objectives for pre- and in-stay in planning. The gap therefore lies in completing the strategic alignment required at L5, where all stages of the customer journey are addressed via social media. PMOAH already has structured governance with the brand and WHG and runs weekly planning routines, yet objectives remain broad and channel-based, with social, paid, CRM, and OTA touchpoints following separate workflows rather than a shared, phase-specific planning cycle. HIAAT's objectives are still general, not mapped to pre-, in- or post-stay needs, and social media is mostly aligned around isolated, campaign-specific initiatives. For both hotels, the core gap compared with TWHL lies in the absence of clearly defined objectives by journey stage and a unified, forward-planned omnichannel strategy, which is more advanced at PMOAH but largely missing at HIAAT. HD also lacks documented objectives, a marketing calendar and formal governance. Relative to PMOAH's organised weekly planning and brand-aligned structure, HD's channels

work in isolation with informal objectives. The gap lies in the lack of foundational basic planning and governance clarity that PMOAH already has.

In Dimension 2, at L5, content is designed and A/B tested by journey stage and segments, with performance insights continuously feeding the calendar and creative choices. UGC and influencers practices have systematic pipelines, and there is consistent integration of guest advocacy into content. TWHL demonstrates advanced pre- and in-stay storytelling and highly structured UGC and influencer workflows. However, post-stay content and loyalty-reinforcing narratives remain underdeveloped, falling short of the L5 requirement for continuous, journey-wide storytelling. The main gap therefore lies in the limited use of social media to sustain post-stay advocacy and reinforce loyalty once guests have departed. PMOAH also shows disciplined segment-based planning with clear CTAs, but its narrative remains centred on pre-stay and selected in-stay topics, with limited post-stay presence, and its UGC and influencer activity is less systematic. The resulting gap to TWHL lies less in content quality and more in the continuity of the narrative across wider journey coverage and the depth of UGC amplification. HIAAT's content is generic and relies mainly on broad recruitment and promotional posts, while HD posts renovated rooms, F&B and seasonal updates. In both hotels, content is not mapped to personas or journey stages, and it also lacks structured UGC or influencer logic. The main gap compared with PMOAH lies in the absence of selective UGC approach, content calendar with call to action (CTA) logic, and audience segmentation.

In Dimension 3, L5 performance means near-immediate DM and review responsiveness, full platform coverage, formalised escalation, and centralised feedback systems that quantify patterns and feed insights into operations. TWHL is already close to this profile, with structured use of Medallia and strong review coverage across OTA platforms, however, Instagram comments are not systematically answered, and several guests report DMs without response, meaning that responsiveness is still uneven across touchpoints. This keeps the hotel at a strong

L4 rather than a fully optimised L5 in community management. PMOAH guarantees SLA-based DM responses and L5 review coverage through a dedicated team, but engages less consistently with public comments, meaning that SLAs are not exceeded. The main gap lies in PMOAH's lower level of guest engagement and less formalised coordination between marketing and guest relations compared with TWHL's more integrated reputation management model. HIAAT does not have defined SLAs or standards for response time and responsibility. In the case of HD, it depends on individual initiative, and it also lacks formal SLAs, structured handovers and systematic analysis. Compared with PMOAH, the main gap of both hotels is basic governance with clear responsibility division, response targets and escalation workflows. In Dimension 4, L5 represents a fully trackable funnel with UTMs, deep links, GA4 and BE integration, enabling attribution across all stages and coordination with all paid channels. TWHL behaves as a L5 performer with consistently tracked funnels and coordinated paid-OTA activity. Remaining gaps are structural, tied to IHG system limitations rather than hotel practices. PMOAH links most posts to generic pages without tracking and relies on high-level reports with no systematic UTMs, deep links or GA4. The core gap, compared with TWHL's full funnel visibility, lies in PMOAH's limited ability to trace and optimise the path from social content to booking behaviour through a dedicated social-specific conversion full funnel. HIAAT lacks basic tracking parameters, consistent landing-page alignment and consolidated funnel reporting. HD also lacks UTMs, deep-linking, GA4 integration and any social-to-booking visibility. Compared with PMOAH's baseline visibility of social-attributed bookings, HIAAT and HD face a more fundamental gap, the hotels lack even basic social-to-booking attribution, alongside consistent UTMs or deep links and recurring conversion reporting. In Dimension 5, L5 requires integrated attribution, automated cross-channel dashboards and a unified view linking social, paid and website behaviour to revenue outcomes. Both TWHL and PMOAH already show advanced performance practices, but neither achieves full L5

integration. TWHL reviews monthly agency and brand dashboards and applies a clear funnel logic, yet attribution gaps remain due to system limitations and the incomplete integration of BE data into cross-channel analytics. PMOAH similarly relies on Sprinklr and DFM reports and uses engagement insights in commercial discussions, but its metrics are less consistently linked to journey stages and remain fragmented across tools. As a result, both hotels fall short of L5, TWHL primarily because of brand-level attribution constraints, and PMOAH because it still lacks a unified analytical environment that consolidates metrics into a single, journey-based view and fully closes the loop between social activity, paid performance and booking behaviour. HIAAT has access to, for example, Booking.com metrics but lacks routine reporting that connects soft engagement to hard outcomes. HD has rich data from Hilton and OTAs but does not review it in relation to social media or consolidate insights into a funnel. Relative to PMOAH's recurring integration of social, paid and soft content signals, HIAAT's gap is establishing a consistent, multi-source reporting cadence, while HD's gap is turning available metrics into actionable performance routines.

In Dimension 6, L5 involves enterprise-level tooling, automation across channels, integration of CRM-social-paid ecosystems and clear role structures supported by specialised expertise. PMOAH relies primarily on its capable internal team, Sprinklr, DFM and Marriott guidelines, without the support of a dedicated agency for social and digital execution. The gap to TWHL therefore lies less in basic capability and more in the absence of specialised external resources and multichannel expertise. HIAAT and HD lack dedicated tools and scheduling platforms, relying on platform-native posting and limited reporting. Relative to PMOAH's structured tooling and clearer internal routines, HIAAT lacks basic social management tools and stronger alignment with brand systems, while HD's main gap is acquiring essential tools, training and workflow organisation.

6.2 Recommendations TO-BE

The following recommendations follow a consistent structure (see [Table 1](#)), beginning with its purpose and expected outcomes, then outlining the key implementation activities, the main resources, core skills and KPIs needed to support execution and monitoring, and the limitations that may affect feasibility. The recommendations combine these findings, identified to be extrapolated to the wider portfolio, with the project's literature review, are linked to the six dimensions of the adapted SMM Framework and are mapped across all stages of the guest journey. Together, they provide a transversal roadmap for strengthening social and digital touchpoints across WHG city-leisure hotels. The subsequent Implementation phase translates these recommendations into a concrete implementation roadmap and a customer journey map highlighting the key touchpoints that drive conversion.

6.2.1 Recommendation 1 (R1): Social Media Governance Playbook

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation addresses the absence of clear governance in social media operations, including inconsistent standards, undefined roles, and fragmented content planning. The goal is to establish a scalable governance model that specifies social media objectives and KPIs (e.g., increasing reach and engagement, driving traffic to direct channels, generating incremental revenue by platform), roles, workflows and publishing routines, enabling efficient and brand-aligned execution. By aligning well-defined social media objectives and KPIs to all stages of the guest journey and supporting omnichannel coordination, the initiative aims to increase execution quality, reduce operational friction, and build long-term trust with guests. Key Activities: (1) Develop a modular governance playbook covering objectives, KPIs, roles, workflows, publishing routines and SLAs; (2) Define platform-specific objectives and identify where new profiles are needed to reach new audiences, expand visibility, and support differentiated content strategies across platforms; (3) Map content formats to journey stages and guest segments; (4) Set up an integrated governance structure with executive

oversight, including routine audits, staff onboarding, and training tied to the playbook; (5) Launch a central asset library with reusable templates tagged by campaign type and occasion, to enable benchmarking, and inform budget allocation and testing. Resources & KPIs: The implementation requires collaboration between the brand, hotel marketing or social media coordinators, and WHG. Tools needed include shared documentation platforms with a digital asset archive and a content scheduler. The key skills involved are content planning, brand governance, basic coordination and creative support. KPIs include the percentage of hotels applying the playbook, SLA adherence, asset reuse rate, and consistency scores in periodic audits. Limitations: The need for brand and legal validation of the playbook, variations in hotel staffing and capabilities, and the ongoing need to update the asset library to maintain relevance and usability.

6.2.2 R2: Social Media Training

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation addresses capability gaps across hotel teams that limit responsiveness, consistency, and content quality on social media. While agency support can be valuable, strong in-house skills are essential to ensure relevance, trend awareness, and guest-centric execution. The objective is to strengthen local ownership by equipping staff with the training, tools, and confidence to apply the governance playbook effectively, leverage available platforms and features, and support long-term maturity growth.

Key Activities: (1) Identify capability gaps by role and define baseline expectations for hotel-level social media execution; (2) Design and deliver modular training integrated into onboarding and staff development cycles, covering content planning, brand voice, platform features, tool usage, and community engagement best practices; (3) Ensure all training reinforces the Social Media Governance Playbook, including roles, SLAs, workflows, and tool application; (4) Establish a feedback process that encourages teams to self-assess progress, collaborate across internal departments, share ideas and test new approaches; (6) Promote active

use of available scheduling, monitoring, and analytics tools to improve execution consistency, performance visibility, and platform fluency. Resources & KPIs: Coordination between marketing and human resources teams, trainers with strong platform expertise, which can also include external partners, or other hotel staff with proven social media experience. Key tools include a basic learning documentation, scheduling and analytics tools, and a maturity self-assessment template. Core skills include content execution, trend awareness, community engagement, analytics interpretation, and brand-aligned planning. KPIs include training completion rates, consistency improvements, engagement results, self-audit results, and adoption of tools and routines across hotels. Limitations: Variability in digital and social media literacy and know-how, training availability, and the need for regular content updates may impact rollout and consistency.

6.2.3 R3: Customer Journey Content Strategy

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation addresses the fragmented and campaign-led nature of current social media activity, the absence of a consistent narrative across the guest journey, and weak alignment between content execution and measurable KPIs. The objective is to define a structured approach that ensures each stage of the guest lifecycle is supported by content with a clear purpose, audience fit, and performance expectation. The goal is to elevate social media from isolated content outputs to a connected storytelling and conversion system.

Key Activities: (1) Define objectives for each journey stage and identify the corresponding content types, formats, and themes best suited to meet those objectives; (2) Create a modular content map linking formats like reels, stories, and carousel posts to journey stages and matching CTAs (e.g., “Book Now”, “Upgrade Room”, “Reserve Spa”, “Leave a Review”); (3) Set KPIs by stage, distinguishing between soft metrics (e.g., reach, sentiment, engagement) and hard goals (e.g., conversions, upsells, retention), and integrate them into planning cycles; (4) Build a shared monthly content calendar that aligns paid and organic planning and connects

campaign activity to always-on content across channels; (5) Use A/B testing for different creatives or CTAs within the same journey stage (e.g., testing two versions of a dining upgrade offer before arrival) and use performance insights to refine content direction. Resources & KPIs: Collaboration between the marketing team, focusing on digital performance and paid media. Tools needed include journey mapping templates, integrated content and media planning tools, and unified soft and hard KPIs dashboards. Skills required include cross-channel content planning, customer segmentation, and storytelling across lifecycle stages. KPIs include pre-stay engagement, booking conversions attributable to mid-funnel content, upsell performance during in-stay communications, and post-stay guest return intent. Limitations: The initial time investment to define and understand journey frameworks per property type, the complexity of aligning campaign and activity across teams, and the need for regular updates to keep content relevant and effective per segment.

6.2.4 R4: Content & Community Engagement SLA

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation focuses on establishing a standard SLA for social media community engagement to address inconsistent response times, fragmented guest communication, and missed opportunities for relationship building. It aims to formalise how hotels interact with guests and followers across platforms by setting clear expectations for response time, escalation flows for sensitive interactions, and coordination between guest relations and marketing teams. Key Activities: (1) Define platform-specific response time and tone etiquette SLAs for both public comments and DMs aligned with guest expectations (e.g., within six hours on Facebook); (2) Develop escalation workflows for handling complaints, negative reviews, and high-risk queries; (3) Create and maintain a library of macro responses and FAQs for common issues such as amenities, check-in times, and cancellation policies; (4) Assign daily or weekly monitoring responsibilities to designated staff and ensure clear ownership across shifts; (5) Track all community interactions using the social media

management tool to enable reporting and visibility; (6) Leverage social media management tools, when available, to set up automated acknowledgements and basic replies during off-hours or low-coverage periods (e.g., nights and weekends). Resources & KPIs: Collaboration between the marketing team, front office or guest relations, and potentially the customer care or CRM function. Tools required include a centralised social media management platform, shared escalation documentation, and a live FAQ database. Skills needed include platform know-how, customer service, and coordination across teams. KPIs include average response time per channel, issue resolution rates, percentage of interactions responded to within SLA, and guest satisfaction indicators such as post-interaction sentiment. Limitations: Operational availability and weekend coverage that affect responsiveness, potential resourcing constraints during off-hours or high-occupancy periods, and the need for consistent alignment between hotel teams and external agencies.

6.2.5 R5: UGC & Influencer Integration Model

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation outlines the creation of a structured model for integrating UGC and influencer partnerships to address the current lack of consistency and strategic use of third-party content. It aims to create a repeatable, brand-aligned workflow for sourcing and using UGC and influencer content that boosts credibility and reach, strengthens property storytelling, and reduces reliance on internal content. Key Activities: (1) Define selection criteria and approval processes for reposting UGC based on brand alignment, quality, and consent; (2) Identify local micro-influencers whose audience and aesthetic match the hotel's positioning and create property-specific outreach lists; (3) Develop workflows for republishing UGC in organic posts and paid formats, including templates and visual guidelines; (4) Set up a standardised tagging, crediting, and legal consent process to ensure transparency and protect brand integrity; (5) Monitor performance of UGC and influencer content to refine selection and storytelling focus over time; (6) Document the full process in the social media

governance playbook to ensure replication across properties and streamline onboarding.

Resources & KPIs: Collaboration between the marketing team, legal and brand compliance, with optional external support for influencer coordination. Required tools include UGC aggregation platforms, if available, content planning templates, and digital consent forms. The key skills involved are content selection, brand storytelling, influencer assessment, and visual consistency. KPIs include UGC repost volume, engagement rate on UGC and influencer content, influencer ROI (e.g., reach, saves, shares), and CVRs from influencer-driven campaigns. Limitations: Need for brand control over third-party content, variable availability of suitable influencers, and time required for legal and aesthetic review to maintain content quality and authenticity.

6.2.6 R6: Deep Linking for Social to Booking

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation proposes the implementation of a standardised deep linking model to ensure that all social media posts, organic or paid, direct users to the most relevant booking page or offer. It addresses the current disconnect between social content and transactional outcomes by closing the gap between engagement and conversion. The objective is to align each CTA with the appropriate booking destination, supported by a consistent UTM tagging structure, and to integrate these efforts into a performance tracking system that measures the true return on social media investment. Key

Activities: (1) Build a central library of deep links mapped to room types, offers, and packages; (2) Define and apply a standardised UTM parameter structure across all posts and ads to support tracking and attribution; (3) Match every social CTA to the most relevant landing or booking page based on journey stage and offer intent; (4) Integrate link tracking data into an analytics dashboard that combines social, web behaviour, and revenue data for full-funnel visibility; (5) Use insights from the dashboard to benchmark paid spend, content targeting, and seasonal strategy. Resources & KPIs: Coordination between the marketing team and revenue

management with input from analytics specialists. Tools include a BE with support for link customisation, GA4, social ad platforms, and dashboarding software (e.g., Excel). Skills include UTM tracking, campaign planning, and performance analysis. KPIs include direct booking share from social media, engagement-to-conversion ratios, CTA CTR, and CPA. Limitations: Digital constraints in BE know-how that limit deep link flexibility and initial effort required to build the central library and performance dashboard, the practical difficulty of enforcing consistent UTM usage, and the increasing data-access restrictions imposed by social media platforms (e.g., reduced tracking and external attribution), which may limit full visibility on social-driven performance (e.g., TikTok Go programme).

6.2.7 R7: Social Media Paid Packages

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation establishes structured paid-social packages that connect campaign activity directly to the stages of the guest journey. By standardising how hotels allocate budgets, define audiences, and plan content, it addresses the current inconsistency in paid social usage across properties and the absence of a unified, journey-based approach. The objective is to provide a scalable paid strategy that enables effective, high-ROI campaigns, driving direct bookings by aligning campaign spend with guest preferences and seasonality, supported by performance data and targeting templates, in a context where achieving engagement through organic content, particularly on Instagram, can be challenging. Key Activities: (1) Define journey-aligned ad packages (e.g., Discovery top-funnel, Consideration mid-funnel, Conversion low-funnel) that link paid campaigns to specific guest journey stages; (2) Assign recommended budget tiers to each package, seasonality, demand patterns, and previous results; (3) Build reusable targeting templates that include guest-journey intent (e.g., early-stage explorers, high-intent bookers); (4) Standardise creative guidelines so visuals, messaging, and CTAs fit each journey stage aligned with brand tone and segments; (5) Track campaign results, refine targeting and spend distribution, and share

campaign performance visibility across hotel teams. Resources & KPIs: Collaboration between hotel marketers, the central digital performance team, and paid media specialists, using Meta Ads Manager or similar platforms and performance dashboards informed by booking and demand trends. Key skills are campaign setup, customer segmentation, and ROI analysis, while KPIs include metrics measured through ROAS, CPA, CTA, and total direct bookings generated. Limitations: Budget disparities varied digital advertising expertise at property level, and the need for ongoing oversight to keep accurate targeting and budget efficiency.

6.2.8 R8: Booking to Arrival Engagement Flow

Purpose & Strategic Objective: This recommendation introduces a structured pre-arrival engagement flow from booking to check-in, designed to strengthen emotional hotel and brand connection and make the on-site experience smoother for the guest. It addresses the current gap in targeted communication strategy during this high-intent phase, where many opportunities for personalised engagement, added-value services, and brand storytelling are currently missed. The objective is to create anticipation and drive action with curated, channel-specific content suited to guest preferences and travel context, with the goal of boosting pre-arrival interaction and upsell conversions. Key Activities: (1) Develop a short-form content series (e.g., “What to Expect”, “Your Stay Guide”) for social channels to be deployed post-booking; (2) Add CTAs within posts and messages for guests to manage or upgrade their stay (e.g., spa, dining, room category); (3) Use stories and DMs to answer straightforward questions, highlight amenities, and personalise the experience before arrival; (4) Set up retargeting ads for booked guests who viewed upsell offers but did not convert; (5) Track engagement and conversion to identify top-performing messages and optimise future content; (6) Integrate all touchpoints into the overall CRM booking journey. Resources & KPIs: Coordination across digital marketing, CRM and guest relations, supported by paid media for retargeting setup. Tools required include social scheduling platforms, CRM audience segments, and retargeting integrations. Skills include

content sequencing, upsell strategy, and social engagement tactics. KPIs include pre-arrival upsell CVR, engagement rate on post-booking content, CTR to “Manage my Stay” pages, and pre-arrival interaction levels. Limitations: Integration challenges with CRM data, the need for tailored messaging across different booking platforms, and variations in upsell inventory across hotels that may affect consistency of offers.

6.3 Implementation Roadmap & Guest Journey Mapping

Horizon	Recommendation ID	Guest Journey Stage	Priority	Impact vs Feasibility	Estimated Implementation Time
H1 Core Digital Foundations	R1: Social Media Governance Playbook	All Stages	Priority 1 (High)	High / High	Short-term (≈0–3 months)
	R2: Social Media Training	All Stages	Priority 2 (High)	High / Medium	Short-term (≈0–3 months)
	R4: Content & Community Engagement SLA	Pre-Service, Service	Priority 5 (High)	Medium / High	Short-term (≈0–3 months)
H2 Connected Guest Journey	R5: UGC & Influencer Integration Model	Pre-Service	Priority 3 (High)	High / High	Short-term (≈0–3 months)
	R3: Customer Journey Content Strategy	All Stages	Priority 6 (Medium)	Medium / Medium	Medium-term (≈3–9 months)
	R8: Booking to Arrival Engagement Flow	Pre-Service	Priority 8 (Low)	Medium / Medium	Medium-term (≈3–9 months)
H3 Conversion & Performance	R6: Deep Linking for Social to Booking	Pre-Service	Priority 4 (High)	High / Low	Medium-term (≈3–9 months)
	R7: Social Media Paid Packages	Pre-Service	Priority 7 (Medium)	Medium / Low	Medium-term (≈3–9 months)

Figure 4: Implementation roadmap (self-elaboration)

This implementation roadmap guides the phased implementation of the eight recommendations, showing in a single view, when each initiative should be tackled, how urgent it is, and its relative impact and feasibility. The Horizons are based on the *Experiential Hospitality, Dining and Travel Digital Roadmap* (IDC, n.d.). Horizon 1 (Core Digital Foundations) refers to initiatives that can be deployed today, strengthening the core guest experience through foundational digital and social capabilities that improve day-to-day touchpoints, data consistency, and execution efficiency across WHG properties. Horizon 2 (Connected Guest Journey) refers to initiatives built on established foundations to enable greater personalisation, advanced analytics, and cross-channel integration that differentiate the guest experience and support stronger performance across WHG properties in the medium term. Horizon 3 (Conversion & Performance) refers to initiatives that are not yet ready for broad adoption, exploring innovative, technological approaches that shape WHG’s long-term vision for immersive and focused on experience hospitality. Guest journey stages indicate where each

recommendation acts, while priorities reflect severity of the gaps, with R1 and R2 placed first as they enable consistent execution of the others. The remaining recommendations follow the priority order presented in [Figure 2](#). Impact combines gap severity and direct linkage to KPIs related to revenue, whereas feasibility reflects what can be implemented with the current tools, skills and resources assessed in the AS-IS analysis. Implementation times rely on external benchmarks and validation from the thesis advisor.

The final TO-BE guest journey illustrated in [Figure 12](#) was developed to translate the recommendations into an end-to-end process view and to make the social media and digital touchpoints between the guests and the hotel explicit across the stay lifecycle. This model is a self-elaboration grounded in the evidence presented in the literature review (see [section 3.2](#)), as well as insights from the maturity assessment, benchmarking and gap analysis. To align operational detail with theory, the seven working stages used in this project, namely Research/Discovery, Consideration/Booking, Pre-Arrival/Expectations at Scale, Check-In/Empathy at Scale, Stay/Experience at Scale, Check-Out/Loyalty at Scale, and Post-Stay/Advocacy, are embedded within the three macro-stages recognised in the literature: pre-service, service, and post-service ([Antolín, 2024](#); [Følstad and Kvale, 2018](#); [Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#); [Rosenbaum et al., 2017](#); [Yachin, 2018](#)). Modelling was performed in Bizagi Modeler, a process-mapping application that implements the Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN 2.0) standard. BPMN is used as a standardised methodology for representing business processes through a graphical notation that is understandable to both technical and managerial audiences ([Lima, Martins, Oliveira, Prizon, Aranda, Martini and Leite, 2025](#)). It is widely applied to design, visualise, and optimise processes by identifying and monitoring activities to achieve desired outcomes ([Lima et al., 2025](#)). In this study, the diagram is structured as a single pool titled “Hotel Guest Journey” divided into two lanes, Guest and Hotel, to clarify

responsibility for each interaction and to provide intuitive method for mapping guest actions, hotel activities and the digital touchpoints that connect them.

7. Conclusion

This project demonstrates how WHG's city-based leisure hotels can optimise digital and social media touchpoints to increase direct bookings. Drawing on a multi-case consulting approach and an adapted SMM framework, the analysis showed that, while some individual properties exhibit good practices, social media management at portfolio level remains fragmented and reactive. Maturity levels range from Ad hoc to Managed, with recurrent gaps in governance, journey-aligned content, community management, and attribution that links social activity to revenue outcomes. Cross-case patterns highlight emerging trends. Hotels with clearer governance, defined routines, and access to specialist support achieve higher maturity and more coherent guest-journey execution, while underperformers struggle with limited resources, weak governance, and siloed tools. Hospitality is a high-touch, experience-driven sector in which DT must reflect the centrality of human interaction ([Ka et al., 2023](#)). In this context, social media and digital touchpoints should extend, rather than replace, high-touch service by delivering personalised, timely, and emotionally resonant interactions with content tailored to segment fit and each hotel's characteristics at each phase of the guest journey ([Lemon and Verhoef, 2016](#); [Weidig et al., 2024](#)). The transversal strategy developed in this project translates these insights into eight recommendations and an implementation roadmap that prioritises and phases initiatives by impact and feasibility across pre-service, service, and post-service stages. Governance and training are positioned as early enablers, followed by content, community, analytics, and booking-to-arrival flows that progressively connect social, paid, website, and BE data into a more integrated system. This sequencing demonstrates that WHG can begin implementing foundational changes in the short-term using existing tools, while building

towards more advanced, data-driven personalisation over subsequent horizons. In line with the project's core contribution, the findings demonstrate how a structured analysis based on maturity and multi-case can be converted into a prioritised execution model aligned with the guest journey, supporting consistent portfolio-level decisions to strengthen direct bookings.

8. Future Outlook and Research Directions

As digital channels continue to evolve, social media and journey-aligned touchpoints will likely become even more central to how hotels compete for visibility, trust, and direct bookings. Existing research highlights that digital interactions shape emotional connection, loyalty, and willingness to book ([Hudson et al., 2016](#)), while integrated digital strategies are increasingly required to match user expectations and behavioural patterns ([Sun et al., 2024](#)). Interview insights and cross-case evidence from this project reinforce this trajectory, hotels are gradually shifting toward more connected and data-informed setups. UGC and influencer collaborations also stand out as emerging priorities. Literature shows that UGC and eWOM have become reliable and influential sources of information ([Camilleri, 2018](#)), and that traveller narratives increasingly guide perception and choice ([Li et al., 2023](#)). Platforms reward authenticity and real-time engagement, and influencer credibility has measurable effects across all journey stages ([Pop et al., 2022](#)). As hotels experiment with creator partnerships, future research could explore how different forms of UGC integrate into journey-aligned strategies and how they contribute to direct booking pathways. Further studies should examine how SMM affects commercial outcomes across ownership models, hotel categories, and geographies. Longitudinal research following WHG's roadmap implementation could provide evidence on adoption dynamics, capability development, and the final phase of the consulting approach: organisational change and measurable effects on direct bookings and revenue. Future work may also deepen understanding of digital personalisation in a high-touch sector, exploring how

hotels can blend technology and human interaction to deliver consistent, emotionally resonant guest experiences across the journey.

9. Limitations

Alongside the findings presented in this project, limitations must be acknowledged. The scope was deliberately limited to one ownership group and a comparable hotel segment to maximise depth and cross-case comparability, which naturally limits external generalisation. The adapted SMM framework was applied as a structured diagnostic tool for benchmarking, not as a newly developed model requiring full statistical validation. Data collection relied on four cases and a few numbers of informants, with uneven access to internal documentation. While [Eisenhardt \(1989\)](#) notes that case additions may continue until theoretical saturation, the four-case design aimed to capture sufficient variation for cross-case comparison. Given the collaborative nature of the project, confidentiality safeguards were applied to protect sensitive information. While this limits disclosure of some numerical details, it does not affect the underlying comparative logic of the analysis. The assessment reflects a defined time window, however, in a fast-changing digital environment, where digital platforms and WHG's own organisation evolve, the roadmap should be treated as a living prioritisation tool to be reviewed periodically. Finally, the project intentionally concludes at the Implementation phase, as detailed Change Management requires extended co-creation, resourcing, and governance decisions by WHG and individual properties, sitting beyond the scope of this project while representing a clear next step for operational implementation.

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11. Appendix

11.1 Confidentiality Disclaimer

In the context of this Work Project, the authors were granted access to a broad set of internal and sensitive information, including, but not limited to, numerical performance indicators, percentage figures, volumes, internal brand and hotel documents, management reports, and detailed KPIs. In agreement with the collaborating organisation, and to avoid the disclosure of critical or sensitive information to external parties, properties, or direct competitors, specific values and proprietary details have been deliberately omitted, aggregated, or generalised throughout the thesis.

These confidentiality measures do not compromise the integrity or robustness of the analysis. All arguments, assessments, and recommendations presented are fully grounded in the underlying confidential data, even when exact figures are not explicitly reported. Where necessary, relative comparisons, ranges, and qualitative descriptions have been used to capture the essence of the findings while respecting the confidentiality obligations established with the collaborating organisation.

11.2 List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BE	Booking Engine
BCG	Boston Consulting Group
BNP	Banque Nationale de Paris
BPMN	Business Process Model and Notation
B2B	Business-to-Business
CJM	Customer Journey Mapping
CPA	Cost per Acquisition
CPC	Cost per Click
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CRS	Central Reservation System
CTA	Call to Action
CTR	Click-Through Rate
CVR	Conversion Rate
DFM	Digital Field Marketing
DMs	Direct Messages
DT	Digital Transformation
DX-CMM	Digital Transformation Capability Maturity Model
DX-SAMM	Extended Digital Maturity Model
e.g.	For Example
et al.	And Others
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
FAQs	Frequently Asked Questions
F&B	Food and Beverage
GA4	Google Analytics 4
HD	Hilton Düsseldorf
HIAAT	Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers
IDC	International Data Corporation
IHG	InterContinental Hotels Group
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
L	Level

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MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
MSEs	Micro and Small Enterprises
OTAs	Online Travel Agencies
PMOAH	Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel
PMS	Property Management System
POV	Point of View
PPC	Pay-per-Click
PR	Public Relations
Q&A	Question and Answer
R	Recommendation
ROAS	Return on Advertising Spend
ROI	Return on Investment
SLA	Service-Level Agreement
SMM	Social Media Maturity
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TVHG	The Vincent Hotel Group
TWHL	The Welbeck Hotel London
UGC	User-Generated Content
UK	United Kingdom
UTM	Urchin Tracking Module
WHG	Westmont Hospitality Group
WOM	Word-of-Mouth

11.3 Tables and Figures

Table 1: Phases of a consulting approach (self-elaboration)

Phase	Description
1. Diagnosis (AS-IS)	The diagnosis phase establishes a factual baseline by gathering and organising evidence on the client, problem, or industry through desk research, review of existing materials, data, and stakeholder interviews, producing a clear “as-is” picture to inform subsequent phases. In this project, four WHG’s city-based leisure hotels were analysed through semi-structured interviews collecting primary data, complemented by internal documents and reports serving as secondary data. An adapted Social Media Maturity (SMM) framework (see section 4.1) guided the collection of information on social media usage, management practices, ensuring triangulation and consistency in the assessment. The outcome is a concise “as-is” profile that directly supports the subsequent benchmarking and gap analysis phases.
2. Benchmarking	This phase identifies best practices through the systematic collection of evidence from comparable cases, enabling a comparison that highlights patterns, differences, and transferable methods appropriate to the client's reality. In this project, benchmarking was conducted internally across the four WHG’s city-based leisure hotels rather than against external properties. High-performing cases were contrasted with low or medium performing ones across the same maturity dimensions used in the SMM framework, examining comparable management structures and operating routines. The analysis isolates what works within WHG’s context, highlights capability gaps, differences, and transferable methods appropriate to WHG’s reality.
3. Gap Analysis	The gap analysis phase compares the “as-is” diagnosis with benchmarked good practices to identify discrepancies, risks, and improvement needs, providing a basis for prioritising actions. In this project, current practices and maturity levels at each hotel were compared with internal benchmarks between cases to reveal gaps in capabilities and processes. The resulting gap map highlights where practices fall short of WHG’s best performers, clarifies root causes, and ranks opportunities for improvement, directing efforts toward changes most likely to strengthen digital touchpoints and increase direct bookings.
4. Recommendations (TO-BE)	The recommendations phase translates the diagnostic insights and identified gaps into clear, actionable proposals designed to bring the client’s situation closer to good practices. It defines the desired future state and outlines the path to reach it through strategic and operational initiatives suited to the client’s reality. In this project, a collaborative analysis of the four authors’ individual findings led to a set of recommendations to improve conversion performance across WHG’s city-based leisure hotels, structured according to the framework learned in the course to organise the initiatives consistently.
5. Implementation	The implementation phase converts recommendations into an actionable plan, defining activities, responsible individuals, dependencies, and necessary capabilities, often coordinating multidisciplinary teams when technological or process changes are involved. In this project, an implementation roadmap and a TO-BE guest journey were developed. The roadmap phases the transversal initiatives for WHG’s city-based leisure portfolio, while the guest-journey mapping integrates the recommendations into key social media touchpoints from pre-stay to post-stay, showing how digital activities should work together to support direct bookings.

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Table 2: Marketing management structures (self-elaboration)

Internal	Agency	Internal but no marketing manager
The Westminster Curio Collection by Hilton	The Welbeck Hotel London	DoubleTree London Hyde Park
Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel		Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers
Crowne Plaza Paris Republique		Hilton Barcelona
Holiday Inn Munich City Centre		Crown Plaza Hamburg City Alster
		Hilton Düsseldorf

Table 3: Cases selection and criteria (self-elaboration)

Selected Case	Brand	Location	Marketing Management Structure	Performance
The Welbeck Hotel London	IHG	London, UK	External agency management	High performer
Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel	Marriott	Paris, France	Internal management with resources	Clear potential
Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers	IHG	Amsterdam, Netherlands	Internal management without a dedicated marketing manager	Underperformer
Hilton Düsseldorf	Hilton	Düsseldorf, Germany	Internal management without a dedicated marketing manager	Underperformer

Table 4: Semi-structure interview informants (self-elaboration)

Hotel	Informant Role	Time
Hilton Düsseldorf	Sales & Marketing Director	1 hour
	General Manager	
	Sales & Marketing Manager	
Holiday Inn Amsterdam Arena Towers	Cluster Marketing Coordinator	44 minutes
	Cluster Marketing Executive	12 minutes
	Former Cluster Marketing Executive	
Paris Marriott Opera Ambassador Hotel	Commercial & Marketing Director	1 hour and 8 minutes
	Marketing Manager	
The Welbeck Hotel London	General Manager	54 minutes
	Sales & Marketing Director	

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Table 5: Overview of existing digital and social media maturity models and framework reviewed (self-elaboration)

Author(s)	Framework / Model	Source	Key Dimensions	Maturity Levels	Industry / Applicability	Social Media Relevance
Gökalp & Martinez (2022)	Digital Transformation Capability Maturity Model (DX-CMM)	Academic	Strategic Governance; Information and Technology; Digital Process Transformation; Workforce Management	6 levels (L0 <i>Incomplete</i> → L5 <i>Innovative Process</i>)	All sectors	Indirect - SM noted as enabling technology in digital transformation
Haryanti et al. (2023)	Extended Digital Maturity Model (DX-SAMM)	Academic	Structure and Organization; Technology; Strategy; Customer; Employee; Culture; Transformation Process	6 levels (L0 <i>Incomplete</i> → L5 <i>Optimizing</i>)	All sectors	Absent – SM not represented
Ka et al. (2023)	A Conceptual Model for Developing Digital Maturity Model for Hospitality Micro & Small Enterprises	Academic	Strategy and Organization; Digital Technology; Digital Capabilities; Integrated Business	4 conceptual phases: IT-enabled; E-commerce-oriented; Content-oriented; Brand-oriented	Hospitality (MSEs)	Integrated – SM and content platforms integrated strategically
IDC (2019)	MaturityScape: Future Enterprise 1.0	Practitioner	Culture (leadership); customers (empathy); intelligence; operations; work (model at scale)	5 stages (<i>Ad hoc</i> → <i>Optimized</i>)	All sectors	Absent – SM not represented
Thomas & Woodside (2016)	Social Media Maturity Model (Healthcare)	Academic	Community; Content; Content + Community; Integration	4 phases (<i>Preparation; Coordination; Integration; Coherence</i>)	Healthcare	Central – entirely focused on SM capability assessment
Jussila et al. (2011)	Social Media Adoption Maturity Model (Innovation/B2B)	Academic	Innovation; SM practices; Information Security; Incentives and motives for participation; skills and competences	5 levels (<i>Ad hoc</i> → <i>Fully mature</i>)	B2B innovation settings	Central – adoption and organizational use of SM
Moi & Cabiddu (2021)	Agile Marketing Capability Maturity Framework (AMC)	Academic	Customer-oriented responsiveness; High flexibility; Human collaboration; Quick and continuous improvement	4 levels (L1 <i>Initial Agility</i> → L4 <i>Proactive Agility</i>)	MICE tourism	Integrated – SM as indicator and enabler of agility
BCG & Google (2019)	Understanding the path to digital marketing maturity	Practitioner	Data-driven targeting; Automated activation; Measurement & attribution; Organizational collaboration	4 stages (<i>Nascent</i> → <i>Multi-moment</i>)	Multiple industries including Travel & Leisure	Absent – SM not represented
Smart Insights (2020)	Digital marketing maturity benchmarking template	Practitioner	Marketing & brand strategy; Digital marketing strategy; Data & insight; Digital media; Content marketing strategy; Digital experience; Digital messaging.	5 stages (<i>Initial</i> → <i>Optimized</i>)	All sectors	Explicit – SM central to engagement and conversion stages
IDC (2018)	MaturityScape: Social Media Management 1.0	Practitioner	Vision; People; Technology; Process	5 levels (<i>Ad hoc</i> → <i>Optimized</i>)	All sectors	Central – practical SM roadmap from fragmented to integrated

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Maturity				Stages				
Dimension	Dimension Description	Sub-Dimension	Questions	Level 1 – Ad Hoc	Level 2 – Opportunistic	Level 3 – Repeatable	Level 4 – Managed	Level 5 – Optimised
1. Strategic Alignment & Governance	Assesses whether social media has clear objectives by guest-journey stage (pre-service, in-service, post-service), who owns execution (hotel/brand/agency), and how it is coordinated with broader commercial and guest-experience goals.	Objectives by Journey Stage	How clearly are social media objectives defined and connected to the guest journey (pre-service, in-service, post-service)?	No documented objectives; social used irregularly and not linked to stages.	Occasional goals exist but are informal and not tied to stages.	One-pager with objectives per stage exists; used inconsistently.	Objectives per stage tied to hotel KPIs (awareness, reputation, direct share) and reviewed monthly.	Objectives per stage drive budgets and tests; reviewed quarterly with evidence of impact.
		Governance & Ownership	How are roles and responsibilities defined for social media (hotel/brand/agency), including weekend/evening coverage? How structured is the process in terms of ownership, escalation, and internal policy or training?	No clear ownership; replies or coverage are inconsistent; no policy or training.	One person informally handles social media; no written rules; limited oversight.	Roles and responsibilities defined between hotel and brand/agency; basic policy/playbook exists; weekday coverage plan and basic escalation; staff onboarded	Cross-department collaboration (Marketing/Revenue/Operations); weekend coverage; escalation paths and response SLAs defined; policy/playbook updated periodically.	Integrated governance with full executive oversight; documented playbook, staff training, and audits ensure compliance; continuous improvement tracked.
		Omnichannel Alignment (by stage)	How well is social media coordinated with website, CRM/newsletter, metasearch and OTA strategy across the journey?	Social media runs in isolation; links often point to homepage; no coordination with other channels.	Informal coordination with website or CRM on major campaigns only.	Shared content calendar across social media + owned channels, timed to each journey stage	Social media integrates with CRM segments and brand/Central Reservation System (CRS) promos; content reflects stage and offer.	Seamless orchestration across touchpoints; social media triggers lifecycle journeys and supports parity/brand control.
2. Content, Audience & User-Generated Content (UGC) Fit	Evaluates the fit of content to priority segments and journey stages, and the systematic use of user-generated content (UGC) and trusted creators/influencers to build relevance and authenticity.	Stage-Tailored Storytelling	Can you provide one example per stage (pre-service, in-service, post-service) if possible. How does each post support the decision/task of that stage?	Generic posts with no clear stage intent; identical across platforms.	Basic platform differences (format/caption) with limited stage intent.	Clear stage purpose for at least two stages; posts link to stage tasks (discovery, sharing, advocacy).	All three stages covered with purposeful narratives and clear Call To Actions (CTAs); on-property prompts used during stay.	Stage design is A/B tested; learnings feed the calendar; consistent uplift versus generic content.
		Persona/Segment Relevance	Who are the top 2/3 segments? How is content differentiated for them?	No defined segments; content one-size-fits-all.	Implicit segments; occasional differentiation based on intuition.	Named personas with examples of differentiated posts.	Persona and stage linkage used in planning; content themes mapped to needs and occasions.	Persona and creative variants are test-and-learn; choices guided by performance insights.
		UGC & Creator Practice	How do you collect, consent, credit and reuse UGC? How are creators/influencers selected for trust/fit?	No UGC practice; ad-hoc gifting to influencers based on reach only.	Occasional reposts; consent unclear; creator selection informal.	Basic UGC pipeline (ask/consent/credit) and simple creator criteria documented; initial use of visual listening tools (detect logo or brand images)	On-property incentives (Wi-Fi/QR/signage) fuel UGC; creators chosen by audience and stage fit; reuse policy applied; visual listening integrated	UGC and visual listening and creator content consistently outperform benchmarks; rights managed; employee/partner advocacy active; program spans multiple journey stages.
3. Community & Reputation (DMs + Reviews)	Assesses responsiveness and tone in social DMs/comments and the rigor of multi-source review management (Google/TripAdvisor/Booking). Emphasis on escalation to Operations, and service recovery outcomes.	DM Responsiveness	What is the typical time-to-first-response for DMs (weekday/weekend), and how is coverage ensured?	No stated Service Level Agreement (SLA)	SLA often missed	SLA met on weekdays	SLA met weekdays + weekends; escalation defined	SLA exceeded; quality monitored & improved
		Review Response Coverage & Service Level Agreement (SLA)	Over the last 30 days, what % of reviews were answered and within what time on Google, TripAdvisor and Booking?	Few or no replies; only one platform checked; no response targets or tracking.	Some responses; cadence irregular; one platform prioritised.	Major platforms covered with weekly cadence and informal targets.	≥90% coverage across main sources; response time documented and monitored; SLA met for most cases.	≥95% coverage; professionalise social media and review management through structured internal processes routinely met; tone/playbooks applied; exceptions audited.
		Listening & Operational Response	How do you monitor DMs/reviews, route issues to the right teams (PR, HR, legal, product), and turn recurring themes into service-recovery or product changes?	Tagged mentions checked sporadically; no triage; issues handled case-by-case; no analysis.	Brand mentions monitored; Reviews checked manually when critical; occasional notes shared; no consistent follow-up.	Brand + competitor listening; initial visual mentions used; basic categories (FAQ/complaint/lead); monthly theme list shared; follow-up informal; basic review dashboard; reports shared monthly.	Formal triage with responsables and response SLAs; multi-source reviews monitored; progress reviewed; review software integrated into Ops workflow (alerts/sentiment tracked); UTM taxonomy maintained and shared; pre-flight link checks standard.	Automated alerts and chatbot for FAQs; closed-loop impact evidenced on ratings; review platform integrated with CRM/analytics; insights drive changes.
4. Journey → Direct Conversion (Social → Booking Engine)	Evaluates the quality of the tracked path from social to the booking engine: deep links and UTM hygiene, Google Analytics 4/booking engine events, retargeting choreography, and offer/rate parity that supports direct booking.	Urchin Tracking Module (UTM) & Deep-Link Hygiene	Do posts deep-link to relevant offers/landing pages using a consistent UTM taxonomy?	Homepage links or no tracking used.	Some links use parameters; UTM patterns inconsistent.	Consistent UTMs to relevant landings across platforms.	UTM taxonomy maintained and shared; pre-flight link checks standard.	Automated link QA prevent tracking errors; links standardised in all cross-channels.
		Google Analytics/Booking Engine Events	Are key Google Analytics / Booking Engines events (e.g., view_item, begin_checkout, purchase) captured for social media sessions and reviewed?	Not instrumented; no event view.	Partial events captured; no routine review.	Core events tracked and periodically checked.	Funnel view (impressions→click→checkout→pur chase) used to diagnose drop-offs.	Insights feed fixes/tests with documented conversion uplift; conversion improvements documented over time.
		Retargeting & Offer Parity	When promoting an offer, is the price/offer the same in the post, on the landing page, and in the booking engine (and metasearch)?	No retargeting; parity not checked.	Occasional retargeting; ad-hoc parity checks.	Standard retargeting audiences active; parity reviewed regularly.	Sequenced retargeting (incl. loyalty); parity exceptions routed manually to Marketing/Revenue/CRS for correction.	Dynamic audiences and creative/offer tests show uplift; parity automated and optimised with alerts and metasearch aligned.
5. Performance Measurement & Return on Investment (ROI)	Assesses the KPI system that blends soft metrics (engagement, sentiment, response) and hard metrics (Click-Through Rate (CTR), Cost per Click (CPC), Cost per Acquisition (CPA), Return on Advertising Spend (ROAS), assisted conversions, direct share) by journey stage, and whether insights guide decisions.	KPI connection to Journey Stage	How are social media KPIs connected to each phase of the guest journey and to measurable business outcomes?	Vanity metrics only (likes/followers/reach); no links to booking or decisions	Channel KPIs tracked without stage linkage; limited impact on planning/budget	KPIs per stage (e.g., pre: reach/CTR; in-stay: UGC/response; post: rating/sentiment) with basic targets	Outcome KPIs dominate (CPA, ROAS, bookings, assisted conversions); insights used to adjust budget/creative; funnel used to spot drop-offs.	Enterprise-integrated dashboard (social + GA4 + Booking Engine + CRM/loyalty); KPIs tied to property/brand targets; ongoing test-and-learn with documented uplifts.
		Hard KPI Tracking & Cadence	Are hard KPIs (CTR, CPC/CPA, ROAS, social→BE conversion, assisted conversions) reported on a 30/90-day cadence?	Not tracked or reported.	Inconsistent exports; no cadence.	90-day reports for core KPIs exist.	30/90-day reporting cadence; ROAS/CPA benchmarks inform spend.	Integrated dashboards; budget rules tied to KPI thresholds; cross-functional review.
		Soft→Hard Link & Decision Use	Are sentiment/engagement/response trends considered alongside revenue/occupancy to drive decisions?	Soft metrics not considered in decisions.	Soft metrics observed but not used.	Soft metrics included in monthly packs; occasional actions taken.	Soft changes trigger creative/offer/service adjustments with documented rationale.	Evidence that soft leads hard; decisions routinely documented with outcome tracking.
6. Resources, Tools & Skills (Optional Enabler)	Check of the resources that enable social execution: publishing/listening/reporting tools and SOPs, role clarity and coverage, and brand/agency coordination and training.	Tooling & Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs)	Which tools are used for publishing, listening and reporting, and what SOPs/access controls exist?	Native tools only; no SOPs or access governance.	Single third-party tool; basic SOPs exist.	Scheduler + listening + reporting; SOPs documented; role-based access documented.	Enterprise tools tied to analytics/CRM; IT-backed SLAs for uptime/support; QA/approval steps; periodic audits.	Automation where appropriate; annual tooling roadmap with IT/brand; SOPs updated after audits; certifications/cross training tracked.
		Roles, Training & Coverage	Are roles clear, coverage assured (evenings/weekends), and is training recorded?	Roles unclear; no coverage plan; no training.	Single owner; limited training; coverage ad-hoc.	Roles defined; annual training completed; weekday coverage.	Roles and responsibilities documented; annual onboarding; weekday coverage; basic escalation.	Full coverage; ongoing upskilling and certifications; audits of tone/quality; cross-training ensures resilience; SLAs consistently met.
		Brand/Agency Coordination	How effectively do hotel, brand and agency coordinate briefs, approvals and reporting?	Minimal coordination; delays frequent; conflicting guidance.	Occasional syncs; duplicated effort.	Regular check-ins; shared briefs and timelines; unified UTM/use of templates.	Joint planning cycles; single reporting pack; approval SLAs; shared KPI tree by journey stage.	Integrated operating rhythm with IT/Revenue/CRM; post-mortems drive changes; budget/creative shifts based on ROI.

Figure 3: SMM assessment framework (self-elaboration)

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Figure 4: Instagram feed (Holiday Inn, 2025)



Figure 5: Last post (HIAAT LinkedIn post, December 2025)

-Group Part-

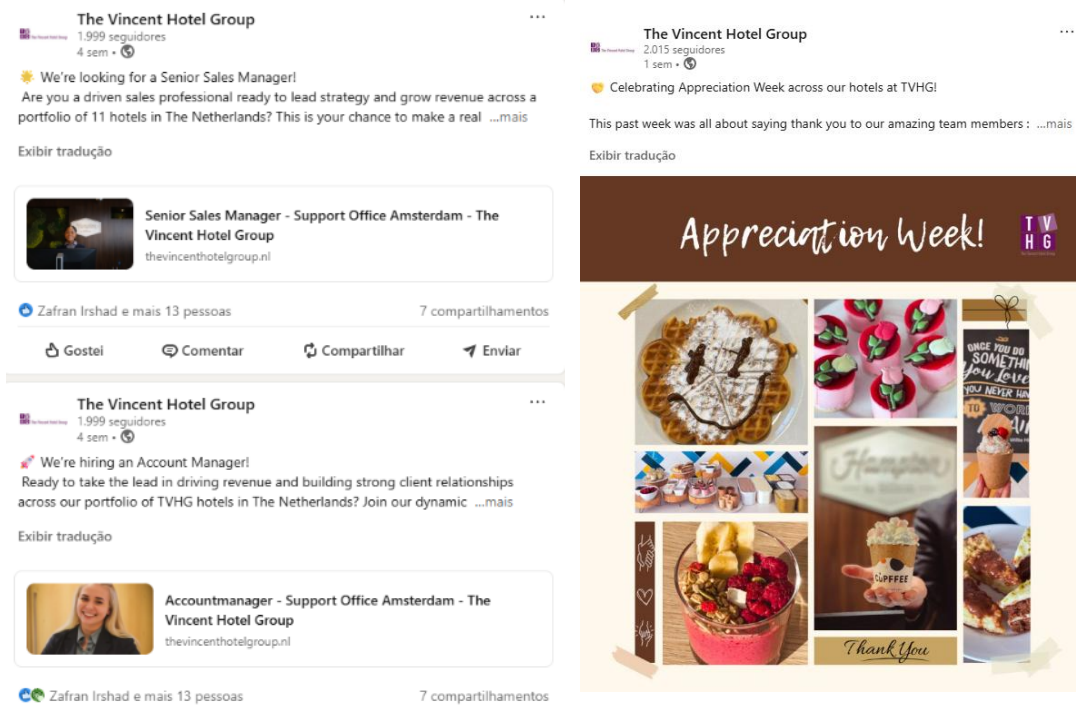


Figure 6: Recruitment and internal events content (TVHG LinkedIn posts, November, December 2025)

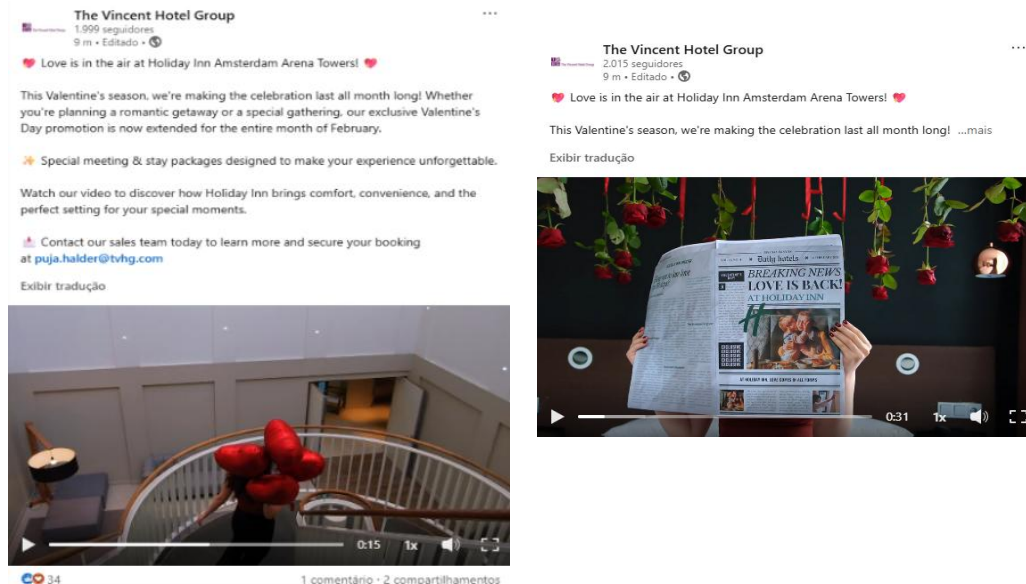


Figure 7: Seasonal campaign content (HIAAT LinkedIn posts, February 2025)

-Group Part-

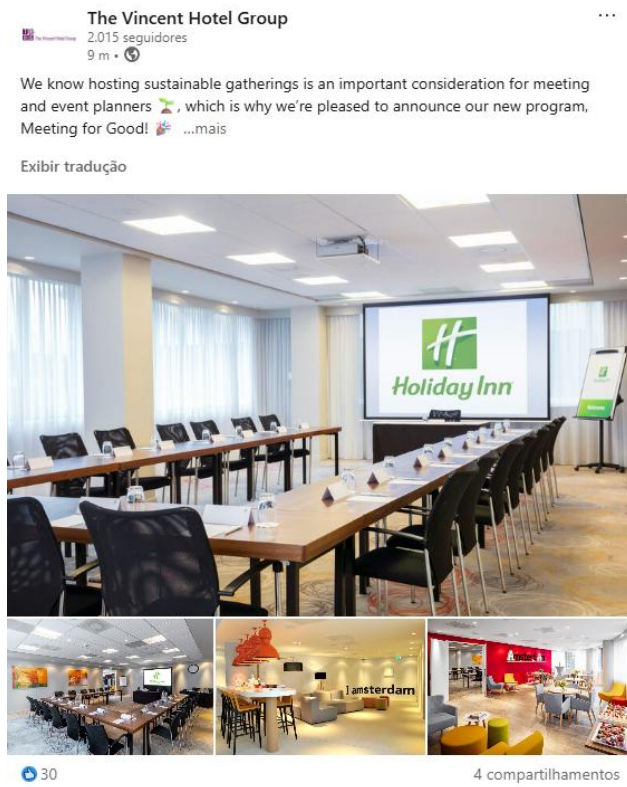


Figure 8: Hotel updates (HIAAT LinkedIn post, February 2025)

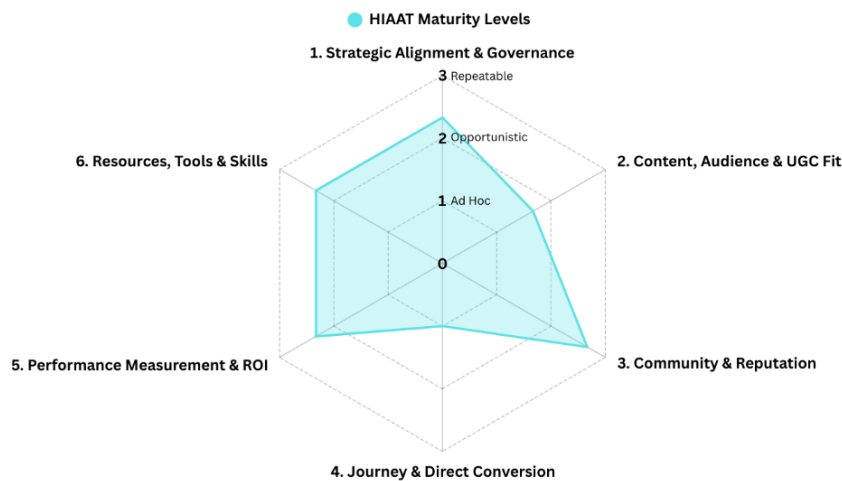


Figure 9: Radar chart HIAAT maturity levels (self-elaboration)

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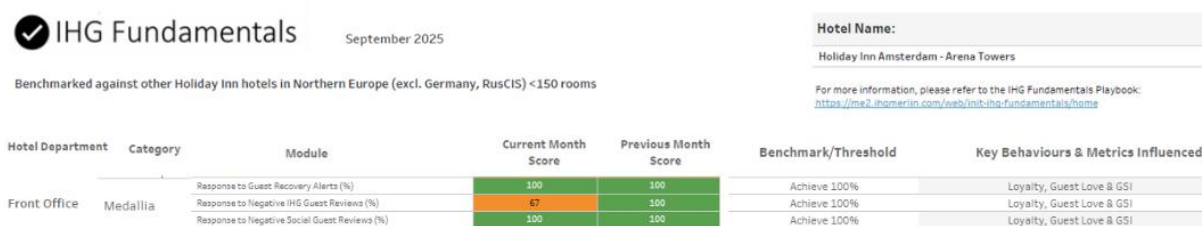


Figure 10: IHG fundamentals scorecard (HIAAT, September 2025)

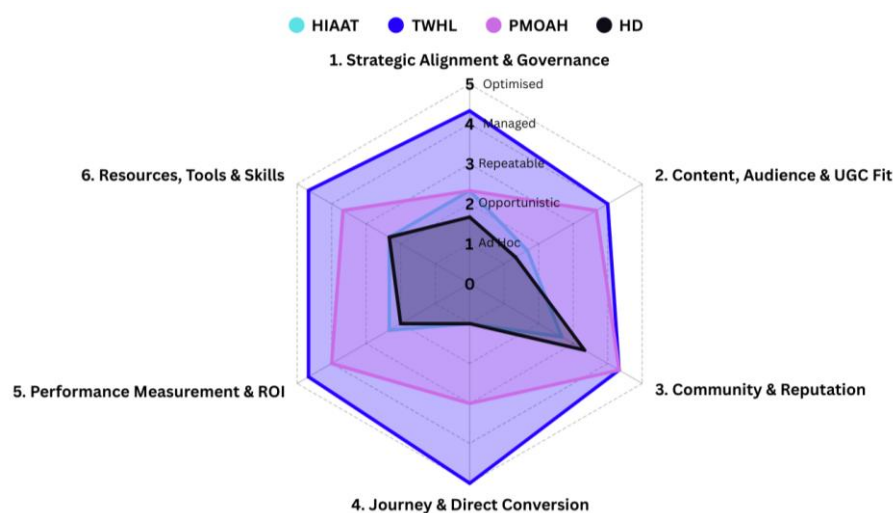


Figure 11: Cross-hotels radar chart maturity levels (self-elaboration)

Table 6: Cross-hotels maturity scores by dimension (self-elaboration)

Dimension	TWHL	PMOAH	HIAAT	HD	WHG Portfolio
Strategic Alignment & Governance	4.33	2.33	2.33	1.67	2.67
Content, Audience & UGC	4.00	3.67	1.67	1.33	2.67
Community & Reputation	4.33	4.33	2.67	3.33	3.67
Customer Journey & Direct Conversion	5.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	2.50
Performance Measurement & ROI	4.67	4.00	2.33	2.00	3.25
Resources, Tools & Skills	4.67	3.67	2.33	2.33	3.25
Overall Average Score	4.50 (L4)	3.50 (L3)	2.06 (L2)	1.94 (L1)	3.00 (L3)

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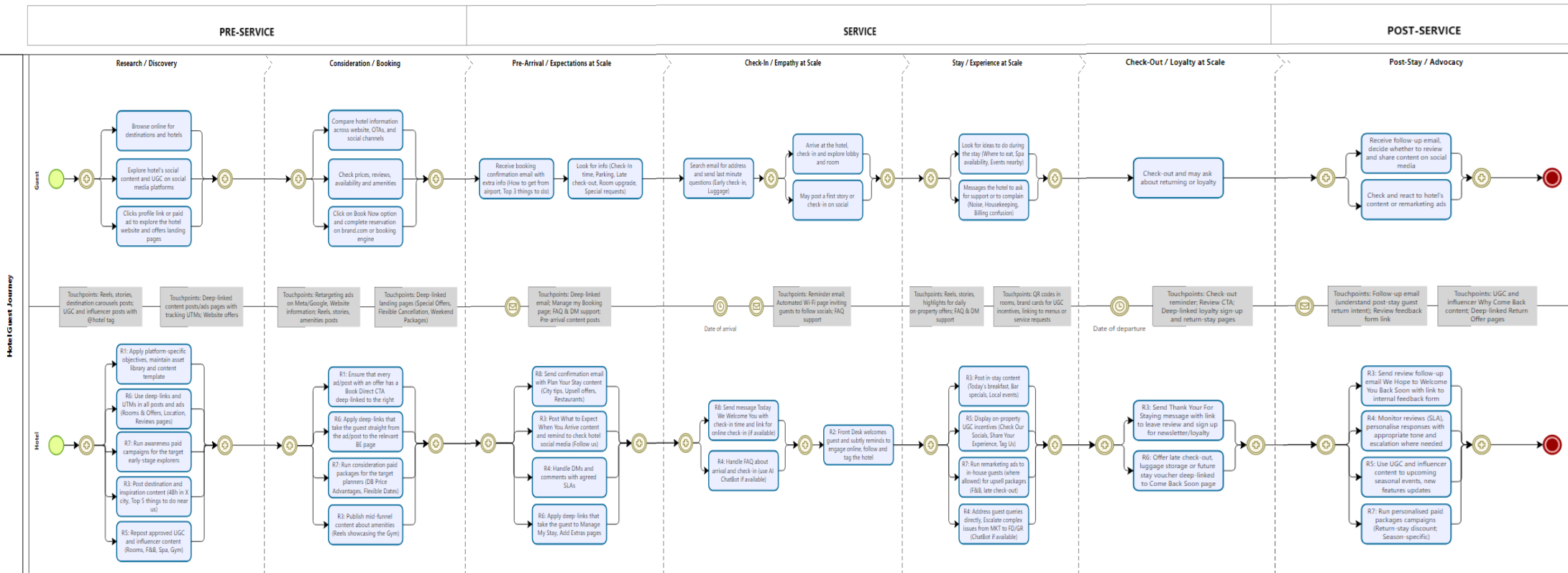


Figure 12: Guest journey mapping with Bizagi Modeler (self-elaboration)