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MHRHOV – Master Thesis

**How is social media communication competence and importance perceived
and to what extent social media communication competence is implemented
by business hotel managers within tourism industry in Norway and
Turkey?**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

There is no doubt that management of communication in business is a key. In hospitality industry that is service – based, the key role of communication becomes even more important especially for service providers as hotels. On the other hand, social media is probably the most applied communication platform of today’s world with its’ exclusive role in daily lives of people and this demand continues to increase.

The research question is to analyze “How is social media communication competence and importance perceived and to what extent social media communication competence is implemented by business hotel managers within tourism industry in Norway and Turkey?” People communicate through traditional and social media at the present time. However, do those communicators have adequate competencies in order to communicate appropriately and effectively through social media? As it is well known that communication is the way of people express themselves to others which could be both business and private life related. Is the role of social media communication and its competencies understood adequately by business segment hotel managers at the present time in tourism industry?

My own background for undertaking this study is that I am from Izmir, Turkey and I am currently studying in masters degree of ‘International Hotel and Tourism Leadership’ at The University of Stavanger and work part – time in one of the hotel chains in Stavanger, Norway. This fact that I have chance to observe Norway while studying along with hometown motivates me as researcher to make a research by conducting one – to – one interviews with managers of the hotel chains in Izmir, home city, and Stavanger, current city in order to understand hotel managers’ approaches to the specified research area and what sort of differences and similarities exist in Norway and Turkey.

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The collected data are from managers whom are specifically responsible for social media management and communication of eight hotel chains in total of Izmir, Turkey and Stavanger, Norway which will remain as anonymous. The reason why same standard hotels and managerial positions are interviewed is to analyze outcomes of the research effectively by keeping the research standards in the same level both in Turkey and Norway.

Since I have not found many research studies on this specific issue, my research is designed on exploratory method. The research aims at bringing new perspectives and views on social media management in relations to communication within hotel chains in Turkey and Norway. The topic of this research question concerns “How is social media communication competence and importance perceived and to what extent social media communication competence is implemented by business hotel managers within tourism industry in Norway and Turkey?” Therefore, the following chapter will have literature review on social media in relation to tourism industry as well as communication competence and importance.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

In this part, I would like to review previously published literatures regarding to the thesis topic which was introduced early in introduction part. Reviewing consists of five subheadings; *Social Media*, *Social Media in Tourism*, *Social Media Management*, *Communication Competence*, and *Communication Importance* in which those have impacts on the thesis topic area. First of all, social media definitions as well as several types of social media will be reviewed shortly before I move on to reviewing Social Media aspects in tourism and how it is perceived and managed by organizations’ managerial levels. After that, competence of communication will be reviewed where intercultural communication

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competence together with new generation model of computer – mediated communication competence is presented in the review. Finally, importance of communication in general will be presented through previously published papers where internal and external communication of organizations will be reviewed more detailed.

2.1.1 Social Media

Several of social media definitions occur within academic journals and previously published researches which will be referred and reviewed in this chapter. According to Leonardi & Steinfield (2013, p.2) social media operate as a platform upon which social interaction occurs rather than functioning as a channel through which communication travels and enterprises. In relation to that, Ahlqvist et al. (2010, p. 4) defines social media as it is built on three key elements; *content*, which refers to user created content that may vary very differently as it may be photos, pictures or videos as well as presence information, tags, reviews and play – lists as examples, *communities*, that is that social media applications enable communication either directly – which is more common on the internet since early days – or via media objectives, and *Web 2.0*, that is the development of digital technologies for content creation and sharing together with web technologies and applications that enable people easily participate on the internet. Social media has exploded as a category of online discourse where people create content, share and bookmark it, and network at a prodigious rate as examples include Facebook, MySpace, Digg, Twitter, and JISC listservs on the academic side because of its ease of use, speed, and reach, social media is fast changing the public discourse in society and setting trends and agendas in topics that range from the environment and politics to technology and the entertainment industry (Asur & Huberman, 2010).

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011, p.243 – 248) that social media consist of seven functional building blocks in which each block allows us to unpack and examine a specific

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facet of social media user experience, and on the other side its' implications for firms which are listed as; *identity* (the extent to which users reveal themselves e.g. LinkedIn), *sharing* (the extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content e.g. YouTube), *relationships* (the extent to which users related to each other e.g. Facebook), *presence* (the extent to which users know if others are available e.g. Foursquare), *conversations* (the extent to which users communicate with each other), *reputation* (the extent to which users know the social standing of others and content), and *groups* (the extent to which users are ordered or form communities). On another perceptive that actually expresses pace of social media movement in our daily lives, so that Noone et al. (2011, p.294) state that social media is moving very quickly that any statistics provided currently will be out of date before long and that said, as of late 2010, Facebook had more than 500 million active users, adding 700 000 new members per day, and 50 per cent of active users log onto the site in any given day.

There seems to be confusion among managers and academic researchers alike as to what exactly should be included under the term of social media and how the seemingly – interchangeable related concepts of Web 2.0 and User Generated Content differ within each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60).

First of all, *User Generated Content (UGC)* consist of regular people who voluntarily contribute data, information or media that then appears before others in a useful or entertaining way. It is usually on the Web such as restaurant ratings, wikis, videos and the usage of such content has rapidly been growing in recent because it is fairly inexpensive to obtain which in details means that users normally supply it for no charge (Krumm & Narayanaswami, 2008, p.10). Most user – generated content outputs are created without expectation of any profit. Nevertheless, the amount of people contributing to these platforms has been growing at such a level that these latter are almost turned into databases that contain an incredible rich value for companies who could use them as market – research – like data to

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understand the trends, needs, wills and interests of consumers (Balasubramaniam, 2009, p. 28). Driven by user – generated content, which includes the ability to share photos, videos, and comments, academic scholars also, noted the capacity of social media in helping tourism and hospitality companies to engage potential guests, increase their online presence, and thereby lead to greater online revenues (Leung et al. 2013, p. 4).

On the other hand, the second incarnation of the *Web (Web 2.0)* has been called the ‘social web’ because its contents are easily to be generated and published by users in contrast to Web 1.0, and the collective intelligence of users encourages more democratic use (Kamel & Wheeler, 2007, p.2). In relation to that, Philip C. Wolf (President and CEO of PhoCusWright, a leading consultancy firm in the tourism arena) has named Web 2.0 applications as Travel 2.0 applications since the web is shifting from a business – to – customer marketing to a peer – to – peer model for the sharing of information and all tourism businesses are thus facing the need to implement strategies and tools (websites or portals) based on user generate contents or, at least, to incorporate these new technologies to enrich their multimedia contents (Miguens et al. 2008). It is in other words bi – directional collaboration in which users are able to interact with and provide information to central sites, and to see that information collated and made available to others (Goodchild, 2007, p.27). In the next chapter, it will be mainly analyzed how effective social media is in tourism industry with the support of some real – time examples of organizations from the industry.

2.1.2 Social Media in Tourism

Tourism as an international industry and as the biggest provider of jobs on the planet boasts a greater array of heterogeneous stakeholders than many other industries (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p.609). Given that the popularity of social media with tourism consumers continues to grow, hospitality and tourism organizations can no longer ignore the rising popularity of social media nor their role in the travelers’ travel planning process (Leung et al.

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2013, p.18). In addition to that, it is critical to understand changes in technologies and consumer behavior that impact the distribution and accessibility of travel – related information in tourism industry (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010, p.179).

Social media is fundamentally changing the way that travelers and tourists search, find, read, trust, and collaboratively produce information about tourism suppliers and tourism destinations as well as social media is in fact challenging existing customer service, marketing and promotional processes throughout the tourism sector, and providing new ways for tourism organizations to reengineer and implement their business models and operations, such as new service development, marketing, networking, and knowledge management (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014, p.33). Prospect tourists have become more open and independent as well as sophisticated on using a wide range of tools which include reservation systems and online travel agencies (such as Expedia), search engines and meta – research engines (Such as Google and Kayak, respectively), destination management systems (such as visitbritian.com), social networking and web 2.0 portals (such as wayn and tripadvisor), price comparison sites (such as kelkoo) as well as individual suppliers and intermediaries sites to arrange for their trips (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p. 611). In relation to that, tools as *ReviewAnalyst*, used by a number of hotel companies including *Starwood Hotels and Resorts*, can be used to track and aggregate customer reviews and ratings from TripAdvisor, Expedia, Priceline and other major Online Travel Agents (Noone et al. 2011, p.300 – 301). Since the 1980s, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been transforming tourism globally, developments in search engines, carrying capacity and speed of networks have influenced the number of travelers around the world that use technologies for planning and experiencing their travels (Buhalis & Law, 2008, p.609). Another fact that also illustrates the impact of social media on tourism industry is that it is not only one – way, but also two – way communication and enables huge possibilities for social media users who can share and post travel information via

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bulletin boards, messages, instant messages, and replies (Chung et al. 2015, p.566). In response to the rapid adoption of social media, the popular press is replete with articles encouraging hospitality firms to embrace the opportunity that social media provides to listen to, and communicate with, consumers which is that it appears as hotel industry is heeding this advice since it is evidenced by the volume of hotel companies establishing a presence across the various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook etc. (Noone et al. 2011, p.294). Social media is a major subject for organizations and as it is mentioned early that it continues with rapid growth every day. At that time then how is it or should it be managed? This is what will be discussed in the next part.

2.1.3 Social Media Management

It is of vital importance that tourism organization managers and destination policy makers understand the antecedents of the tourists' use and adoption of social media before, during and after their trips due to the impact of these collaborative behaviors tourists' decisions about the choice of all the elements of the trip as destination, accommodation, activities, restaurants etc. (Parra – Lopez et al., 2011, p. 640). It is actually a fact that the practice of 'listening' to the customer and using that information to inform decision makers is not new in which hotel companies have long employed a number of approaches to capture the voice of the customer, from guest comments cards to mystery shopper data where in summary the idea here is not to replace these traditional data sources, but to augment them with social media based customer feedback (Noone et al. 2011, p.297).

Social media is very broad in fact that requires well – planned and structured management actions especially within tourism industry as previously mentioned where interactions may possibly have serious impacts on tourists / travelers as well as suppliers (hotels, operators etc.). On the other side, Noone et al. (2011, p.294) mention about a possible challenge that hotels may likely face in their pursuit to engage consumers via social media which is the very

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personal and individual nature of the social media environment whereas hotels are corporate entities; thus, hotel companies have to figure out how to establish an online personality congruent with the brand promise, yet interact in a genuine and transparent manner with consumers such that the consumer is engaged and trust is built.

According to Kietzmann (2011, p.249 – 250) guideline – the 4Cs: (1) *Cognize*, which proposes a firm to first recognize and understand its' social media platforms to unveil the social media functionality and engagement implications for understanding its' customers, (2) *Congruity*, a firm then needs to develop strategies that are congruent with, or suited to, different social media functionalities and the goals of the firm which involves focusing on core aspects of social media activity that will facilitate the needs of its business, (3) *Curate*, a firm must act as a curator of social media interactions and content which involves developing a clear understanding of how often and when a firm should chime into conversations on a social media platform, and who will represent the firm online, (4) *Chase*, it is important for firms to follow conversations and other interactions that include a particular firm, brand, product, or individual. In other words, influencing and maintaining a reputation of a brand or building brand awareness requires numerous competencies in strategy development that is grounded in the analytics of data which in turn requires a high degree of creativity. Moreover, that is based on knowing how to create and distribute content that is fun, clever, and relevant, and collaboration that is a degree of coaching both internal and external stakeholders on the virtues of social media and serving as the social media “*evangelist*” (Montalvo, 2011, p. 92 – 94).

On the other perspective of managing social media in tourism industry, Parra – Lopez (2011, p. 641) mentioned that it is essential for professionals to identify the types of customer value perceived by travelers using social media for trip planning purposes, because it can provide significant guidelines on how to design the information sources, the structure and the

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functionality of social media in order to enhance their web traffic, usage and competitiveness. According to Noone et al. (2011, p.299) that social blogging provides an opportunity for hotels to connect with the customer, develop the brand voice and instill trust in the customer. Georgescu and Popescul (2015, p.281) also point out that the impact of social media on the activity of the contemporary organizations is major and profound, thus it can be seen on managerial level; however, there are certain negative aspects such as addiction to the Internet and decrease in concentration, changes in socializing habits, ways of expressing opinions, weakened cognitive processes, abstract vocabulary, impeded reflection ability, critical thinking and imagination, developing a negative environment and rude, aggressive, vicious behavior on blogs, forums, and social networks, proliferating plagiarism, piracy, identity theft, hacker attacks, appearance of the new threats and security issues, that should all be considered carefully by the Internet users as well as social media managements. All those possible threats lead us to ask if social media users at work are capable and competent about social media.

As this thesis focuses on communication competence and importance in relation to social media within tourism industry, it is beneficial to address and review literature of dependent variable 'communication'. Therefore, '*Communication Competence*' with the support of illustrated model (*Computer – Mediated Communication Competence*) will be analyzed in the next part of review which will also be followed by '*Communication Importance*' including internal and external communication reviews.

2.1.4 Communication Competence

In Ancient Greece, the subject now referred to as 'communication' was known as rhetoric, using language to persuade the listener (Argenti, 1998, p.234). Communication, which involves the creation of the meaning in the listener, the transfer of information and thousands of potential stimuli, also enables us to do important things, to grow, to learn, to be

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aware of ourselves and to adjust to our environment, is a process involving the sorting, selecting, and sending of symbols in such a way as to help the listener perceive and recreate in his own mind the meaning contained in the mind of the communicator (Rayudu, 2010). In addition to that Usmani (2008) points out the fact that computers have brought a revolution in the field of communication; additionally, the Internet has linked every single field and every single part to each other, and information can be communicated from one place to another at very fast pace through internet with the help of computers.

Social media introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and individuals; moreover, this presents an enormous challenge for firms, as many established management methods are ill – suited to deal with customers who no longer want to be communicated with; instead, customers want firms to listen, appropriately engage, and respond (Kietzmann, 2011, p.250).

Keyton et al. (2013, p.154) defines communication competence as communication effectiveness and adds that the construct is often modified as relational competence and communicator competence and has attracted considerable attention within the interpersonal communication literature while Penley et al. (1991, p.58) claims that the term of “Communication Competence” is frequently used to refer to the level of communication skill that a given communicator possesses. Moreover, as Spitzberg (2000, p. 380 – 384) mention during the researches of communication competence in which the model portrays the process of dyadic interaction as a function of two individuals’ *motivation* to communicate, *knowledge* of communication in that context, and *skills* in implementing their motivation and knowledge. If not, interactants may be seen as incompetent because they lack motivation to perform competently, knowledge of the competent lines of the action in the context concerned, or the communication skills to carry off a deft interaction. Firstly, *motivation* is defined very simply, the more a person wants to make a good impression and communicate effectively, the more

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likely it is that this person will view self, and be viewed by others, as competent. Second of all, *knowledge* is that the more an interactant knows about how to communicate well, the more competent that person is likely to be. As a last component of the model *skills* are any repeatable, goal – oriented actions or action sequences that have core impact on performing motivation and knowledge. On the other side, Hwang (2011, p. 924) points out an interesting aspect for communication competence in electronically mediated settings and mentions that the sharp distinction between social interactions and for non - mediated communication and mediated communication is disappearing; therefore, communication competence in electronically mediated settings could be now treated as an essential factor for individuals to extend proper social interactions into the different types of a conversational circumstances. In parallel to that, Spitzberg (2006, p.649) illustrates a model of *computer – mediated communication competence* which is visually represented in Figure 1.

This model proposes that motivation represents the initial energizing process of knowledge search and application, which manifest through the selection of skills that are applied to the selection of media and messages. Certain motivations are better served by certain media features (e.g. a shy person may prefer an online dating system that permits more lurking than participating) and messages (e.g. a high status person may prefer efficiency and task – orientation of message content). Knowledge of the most competent messages and media is searched and selected accordingly and subsequently implemented through the skills of CMC (Spitzberg, 2006, p.649)

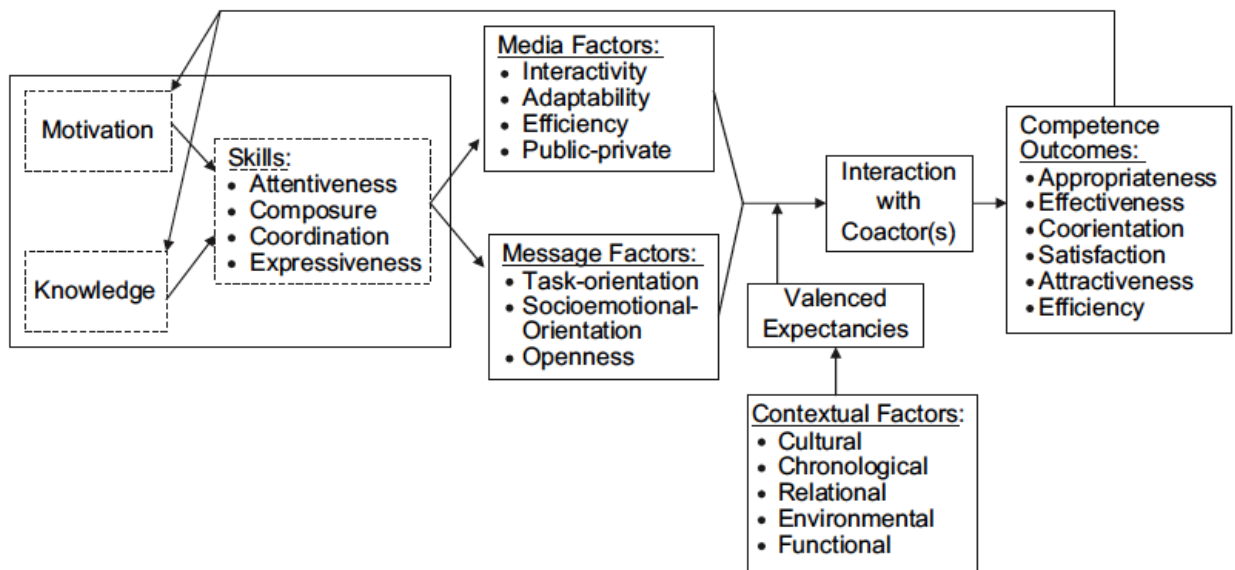


Figure 1: A Model of computer – mediated communication competence (Spitzberg, 2006, p.649)

In the research of Martin and Hammer (1989, p. 305), it has been cited how cultural differences may impact on everyday communication and the competence of it as it is mentioned that everyday language users perceive to be important in forming impressions of competence of someone from the individuals *own* culture; in addition to that, it is not known yet whether there are different behaviors that influence their communicative competence impression toward someone from *another* culture.

With the change in the nature of communication and notions of community there has been a change in how travelers gather information and make their travel decisions which in general is that travelers place a high degree of trust in their social media networks – information is gathered and synthesized from other travelers (Lange – Faria & Elliot, 2012, p. 197).

2.1.5 Communication importance

There is no doubt that communication is a key aspect for organizations and managing an organization is fundamentally tied to communication (Penley et al. 1991, p. 57). Virtually, everything that happens in an organization involves communication as Malmelin (2007, p.305) points out the importance of communication at corporate / organizational level.

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According to Large (2005, p.28) Communication is one of the most important behavioral aspects in business life and as Dawkins (2005, p.118) points out the importance of giving consistent information both internally and externally, not least to equip employees to answer stakeholders' queries on whether the company is actually taking particular issues as seriously as it claims. According to Rayudu (2010, p.218) it is significant to note that various old tools or media of communication though in significant use, a number of new tools and techniques have been developed either replacing the old ones or in addition to them due to technological advancement which has supplied many sophisticated communication technologies. Communication in social media seems to be used in two primary ways in organizational context. The first way, which is more commonly studied, is for organizational communication with external parties, such as customers, vendors, and the public at large. The second way, which is less commonly studied, is in which organizations have applied social media is for internal communication and social interaction within the enterprise (Leonardi & Steinfield, 2013, p.2). Further, Buhalis & Law (2008, p. 611) cites that due to the popularity of the Internet applications, most tourism organizations such as hotels, airlines and travel agencies have embraced Internet technologies as part of their marketing and communication strategies. On the perspective of managers, Smidts et al. (2001) believes that managers should make decisions about either to communicate their companies' successes that is often attained by means of external communication or to emphasize the intrinsic qualities of the organization for its members, by means of internal communication. According to Madlock (2008, p.62) leadership appears to be enacted through communication in such a way that it contains a relational (affective) and task (content) component; in addition to that, when leaders communicate effectively, their followers experience greater levels of satisfaction.

Through the most obvious form of blogs in tourism appear to be blogs from travelers who publish their personal travel stories and recommendations online, corporate blogs or business

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– to – customer blogs, like *Marriott on the Move* and *McDonald's Corporate Responsibility Blog*, are as well prevailing since many tourism companies would like to learn and improve while listening to their customers (Leung et al. 2013, p.12 – 13). Better communication technologies, at the same time, empower suppliers and destinations, allowing for more efficiencies, collaboration and flexibility; additionally, the requirement related to this is strategic and tactical management to ensure that future opportunities can drive innovation and competitiveness of tourism organizations by basically keeping the control over communication technologies in which social media is specifically investigated in this study (Lange – Faria & Elliot, 2012, p. 197).

As Georgescu and Popescul (2015, p.281) concludes that through a perceptive of business, after the consumers had received a voice by means of the informational and communicational technologies, the companies created various channels to collect and understand the requirements of these voices and it is being witnessed that it is a trend in which organizational models tend to include the social media applications.

Communication is a key fact both internally, which is within the company / organization, and externally, that is basically the integration of the company / organization with outside as media, customers, governmental agencies etc. As Malmelin (2007, p.305) indicates that corporate communications used to be described as an exercise in information; that after all its purpose of was to impart information about the organization's operation and performance both to people within the organization (internal) and to stakeholders on the outside. More detailed definition of how communication is managed within the organization both internally and externally is stated by Grunig (1975, p.102) that there are many types of organizational communication in which individuals communicate with peers, superiors, and subordinates within the organization; managers manage through communication; employee communication departments attempt to inform and/or secure “cooperation” from employees; labor relations

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specialists deal with labor unions; formal and informal communication take place between departments and role occupants throughout the organization; public relations specialists communicate to external audiences about the organization in general, and advertising departments communicate to consumers about the organization's products and services; finally, organizations communicate with other organizations where generally share common problems or values.

2.1.5.1 Internal Communication

Business success is dependent very much on the effectiveness and flexibility of internal organizational communication which is usually the responsibility of the communications unit and communications director (Malmelin, 2007, p.304). Internal communication, among the fastest growing specializations in public relations and communication management, began rising in the 1990s in the US and spread thereafter to Europe growing strength in the new millennium, especially after host of factors such as globalizations, deregulation, and economic crisis brought with them permanent restructuring, downsizing, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, and other types of more or less creative destruction (Vercic et al. 2012, p. 223). Nowadays in 21st century, these issues increasingly becoming considerably huge ones regarding to technological evolutions that occur mostly everyday of our lives within the most parts of daily work lives. Argenti (1998, p. 199) additionally mentions more about the causes of employees communication which is in this case is 'Internal communication' that the overall environment is more competitive than ever before, more global than in the past, and more independent on other organizations and government agencies.

The rise of internal communication as a separate management discipline – largely as a response to a continuing change within organizations – is fast moving things in that direction; moreover, internal communication managers are most likely more aware than their colleagues of the pivotal link employees in most organizations have in balancing and satisfying the needs

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of the other stakeholder audiences (Scholes & Clutterbuck, 1998, p.236) Many organizations have come to realize that organizational practices which traditionally have been thought of as strictly internal, which is for instance, the structure of work processes, the use of resources, the disposal of waste and the practice of leadership, are now becoming central themes in the public discourse, and in addition to that, it is part of the communication that the organization, even though sometimes unwillingly, carries on with its' surroundings (Balmer et al. 2001, p. 297 - 298). In parallel to that, Foreman and Argenti (2005, p. 248) claims that a company can create competitive advantage by socializing, which is most likely handled with internal communication, its constituents to its own culture and can use communication strategy to form long – term relationships with the constituents who shape the organization's image and reputation. Furthermore, developing a sense of community through internal communication efforts involves establishing and maintaining relationships between an organization, supervisors, and employees (Karanges et al. 2015, p.129). According to Bob Carlwright, Mitchells & Butlers' communications director, believes that employee communication is a very important part of staff motivation and satisfaction; furthermore, there is a virtuous circle in which improving employee satisfaction leads to greater customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to sales growth and greater profits which, in turn, should produce greater employee satisfaction. "Actually proving those relationships is never easy. It is a common sense view that if you have poor staff morale, you are likely to get lower customer satisfaction, and the business will definitely suffers." (Farrant, 2003)

On the other perspective, according to Kalla (2005, p. 302) that integrated internal communications are not limited to the formal tasks performed by the corporate communications functions, but instead all formal and informal communication taking place inside an organization is included. Furthermore, Welch and Jackson (2007, p. 179 – 180) points out the diversity of definitions and aspects of internal communication and lists

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suggestions of what is necessary to address these issues; firstly, it is to map understanding of the fields of organizational communication and corporate communication to position internal communication within a field of study; secondly, to critically review definitions to consider the nature, scope, focus and goals of internal communication; lastly, to identify the stakeholders of internal communication.

Yet, there are conflicts and misunderstanding of the term ‘internal communication’ that may occur within some organizations and still may be perceived as sharing information which employees whom may sound insecure for some managers, even though employees of today’s world are way more educated than earlier stages of business life in the past and carry less interest in simply climbing the corporate ladder. In the study of Vercic et al. (2012, p. 227) that issues related to internal communication came up among respondents included credibility of leaders, engagement and employee loyalty, motivation, social media, cultural differences, and interpretation of messages, communication of line managers/ managers, web based social networking, communicating change, communicating during social crisis, and issue management. However, enlightened managers of today’s business world know that the more information they provide to employees, the more likely these employees are to be highly motivated to do a better job, to advance in their positions as well as to further the goals of the organization itself (Argenti, 1998, p.200). Karanges et al (2015, p.130) supports the importance of internal communication within the conclusion of their study and state that the internal supervisor communication and internal organizational communication are both important aspects for organizations and there is a need to support these functions, both strategically and in resources, as part of the overall internal communication function; finally, their study acknowledges the importance of internal communication in facilitating supervisor – employee relationships as a vehicle to express values and goals, and in turn, pave the way for favorable organization – employee relationships.

2.1.5.2 External Communication

Within the specialize perspective of social media, Cmeciu et al. (2014, p.879 - 880) points out increased awareness of public organizations of the benefits that social media tool may have on their external communication, with stakeholders, and in fact that visibility and transparency of their actions, public organizations using Web 2.0 strategies shape the new public space by providing another forum of deliberation, enhancing discussion, and a promoting democratic exchange of ideas and opinion

External communication is basically the integration of the particular organization / company and the outside world, as examples of media, customers etc. In recent years, with the growing emphasis on the Internet as an industrial communication tool, web sites of companies have become a significant channel for communication customer references, as buyers apply the Internet in order to source suppliers and solutions for their specific needs (Jalkala & Salminen, 2009, p.826). Whenever a consumer or some other external stakeholder comes into contact with the company or company representative, they form new opinions, perceptions, and impressions of the company (Malmelin, 2007, p.305). Companies nowadays need to make efforts to portray themselves as ethical organizations and to differentiate themselves in a more socially and democratically ruled market (Cornelissen & Thorpe, 2001, p. 414); in addition to that, companies which adopting and implementing customer commitment as a way of doing business have a strategic advantage in differentiating themselves from their competitors and have a significant message to communicate to potential customers as a way of generating new business, and to existing customers as a means of reinforcing already established relationships (Judd & Tims, 1991, p.353). “It is amateurish and hardly fit for the purpose of managing stakeholder communication in the super – information environment post – 2000, not with any hope of success” Scholes & Clutterbuck (1998, p.234) say. Smidts et al. (2001) points out external communication through the perspective of managers and claims

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that managers can influence the company's external prestige as perceived by employees; moreover, that generally leads to that information about the company will enhance the identification with the organization because it adds to its' visibility and distinctiveness as well as increase employees' awareness of being a member of that particular organization. Malmelin (2007, p.307) focuses on communication with external stakeholders, groups outside the company that indirectly impact the company's business including consumers, organizations, activist groups, and the authorities etc., and suggests that relational capital is increasingly important for all businesses; therefore, maintaining relations with journalists and the media is one of the most critical tasks for public relations operations.

As external communication is all about outside of the organization and since it is mentioned early on that public relations is the crucial part of activating external communication. Organizations communicate with their environments in several ways, either through individual contacts of their members or through institutionalized communications roles which are that of the public relations department (Grunig, 1975, p.125). According to Ledingham & Bruning (1998, p. 56) the term "public relations" implies that the research and practice of the discipline should focus on an organization's relationships with its' key publics, concern itself with the dimensions upon which that the relationship is built, and determine the impact that the organization – public relationship has on the organization and its' key publics. The several definitions of public affairs functions suggest three summary characteristics; *firstly*, public affairs concerns political and social issues that will affect organizational private interests but not as directly as do the product or service interests of an organization; *secondly*, the effectiveness of public affairs is interdependent on consensus by many interests outside the organization; *thirdly*, public affairs functions cross organizational boundaries and go beyond the publicity / promotional efforts associated with communicating messages about the organization's products or services (Toth, 1986, p.29). In brief, the moment an organization

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brings out a certain message, it produces a certain component of the public sphere, by presenting meaning and constructing frames in the public debate (Ihlen & van Ruler, 2007, p.245).

3. METHODOLOGY

Social research collects research endeavors which focus on ‘the social’, that is, phenomena that are related to people living together; whether these are conceptualized as structures, processes, perspectives, procedures, experiences or whatever (Ten Have, 2004). According to McDonnell et al. (2000, p.384) investigators have to contend with the sometimes uneasy relationship between theory and the practicality of carrying out research in a real – life setting during any research study; consequently, the implications of carefully laid plans, made well in advance, have a habit of ‘coming out of the woodwork’ at regular intervals during fieldwork. It is also important to understanding the philosophical debates underpinning the development of social research in general in which that the issue of how the social world can be studied brings some philosophical questions that relate to ‘*ontology*’ – what is the nature of the social world and what is there to know about it?, and ‘*epistemology*’ – how can we learn about the social world and what is the basis of our knowledge? (Ritchie et al. 2013, p.4).

Science is sometimes characterized as logico - empirical which is the term carries an important message: the two pillars of science are logic and observation which is, a scientific understanding of the world must both make sense and correspond to what is observed (Babbie, 2015, p.10).

After a brief explanation of social science and its’ aspects, it is now beneficial to get more into specified terms of social science that are applied within this thesis where first of all, explorative design will shortly be explained in the next chapter and it will be linked to the real

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– time experience of this thesis, thus qualitative method, interviewing (semi – structured), ethics and conducting interview chapters will be followed in this part of the thesis.

3.1 Exploratory Research

It is a long standing assumption that qualitative research in the social sciences has its greatest role to play in the exploratory phases of researching a topic area where in this situations, little is known about the subject to be investigated, and so hypotheses are purely speculative (Conger, 1998) Because there have not been many researches published in relation to the main theme of this thesis work, the research is mainly based on exploring in specified area in tourism industry. According to Shaw (1999, p.62) the exploratory nature of the research identified a qualitative research approach which allows the researcher to view the research problem in its entirety, get close to participants, penetrate their realities as well as interpret their perception as appropriate. The researcher's aim is to generate and explore as many assumptions as possible about the phenomenon under the study where in this thesis; I have gone through over viewing related as many as possible hypotheses in direction to the aim of the explorative research study (Conger, 1998).

3.2 Qualitative Method

Even though definitions of qualitative research vary, the aims of qualitative research are generally directed at providing an in – depth and interpreted understanding of the social world, by learning about people's social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives as well as histories; in addition to that, it covers a broad range of approaches which are linked to different beliefs about what there it to know about the social world and how to find out about it (Ritchie et al. 2013, p.23). Fossey et al. (2002, p.717) claim the aim of qualitative research as to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds and central to

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good qualitative research is whether the research participants' subjective meanings, actions, and social contexts, as understood by them are illuminated. Maxwell (1992, p.279) explains in his article as qualitative researchers rely – implicitly or explicitly – on a variety of understandings and corresponding types of validity in the process of describing, interpreting, and explaining phenomena of interest. On one hand, Babbie (2015, p.24) states that every observation is qualitative at the outset, whether it is our experience of someone's intelligence, the location of a pointer on a measuring scale, or a check mark entered in a questionnaire. In short, qualitative methods are best understood as *data enhancers* and offer complex descriptions and try to explicate webs of meaning (Ten Have, 2004).

Knight (2001) elaborates on advantages of qualitative researches and the possible threats of it in his book as stated:

Qualitative data is easier to categorize and make sense of if you know what you are looking for, and easier still if the research was designed explicitly to look for that and that alone. It is easy to see only what is obviously relevant to those perspectives and to miss indications that things might be rather different than the perspectives imply. For example, when the research questions are about the effects of change, it is easy to tally up instances and to count the frequency of different effects and to miss the evidence of continuity (Knight, 2001)

The reason why qualitative method is applied in this study is as Knight indicates that it enables researchers who know what to look for out there to have more effective and empirical outcomes as in this study it is. Plus that there is no such testing a theory in this study which would most likely cause problems in qualitative design as Knight stated.

Researchers manage qualitative studies tend to collect as much data as they can which will allow them to capture all of the elements of an event that come together to make it the event

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that it is (Sandelowski, 2000, p.336). After the interviews have been completed, in parallel to what Sandelowski indicates that there has been quite much amount of data gathered through qualitative designed interviews.

3.3 Interview

One of the most common style of conducting qualitative research is to *interview* a number of individuals in a way that is less restrictive and standardized as in this thesis semi – structured interview model is applied and will be explained detailed under the next subchapter (Ten Have, 2004). Interviewing has become a powerful force in modern society; starting almost from the beginning, we are confronted by questions posed by educators, psychologists, pollsters, medical practitioners, and employers, and we listen to “flamboyant interviewers” on radio and television (Briggs, 1986, p.1). Specific advantages of interviewing are stated by Weathington et al. (2012) as (1) it tends to encourage high degree of cooperation by participants which is proved in the interviewing process of this research where most participants were encouraged to cooperate except from particular one whom was not reflected as positively as others , (2) it is difficult to skip or ignore the question by interviewee since it a direct question which was a crucial positive aspect of the interviewing process, and finally (3) the participant understands the questions and asks follow – up questions to clarify participants’ responses which enriched the quality of answers to each questions during the interviews. According to Kvale (2006, p. 484 – 485) that the qualitative research interview entails a hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution of interviewer and interviewee, thus Kvale lists overview of some of the power dynamics in research interviews as;

- *The interviewer rules the interview.* The research interviewer has a scientific competence and defines the interview situation by determining the time, initiating the interview, deciding the topic, possessing the questions and critically following up on

the answers as well as choosing the conversation. In regards to real – time interviewing experience of this research, I was the one directing questions according to pre – planned structure and timing to interviewee, and having the control almost all the time. As Kvale indicated in this point that as interviewer I had scientific competence, especially when it came to specific questions regarding to ‘communication competence’ where I had to explain the theory to interviewee as interviewer.

- *The interview is a one – way dialogue*; one - directional questioning where the role of the interviewer is to ask, and the role of the interviewee is to answer. According to interviewing experiences of mine, this theory of Kvale is most of the time valid; however, it is not possible to generalize as Kvale did since there have been times that I was directed questions from the interviewees in regard to the research topic. I would personally state that it is a matter of time when each side could be either faced to questions or the one directs them.
- *The interview is an instrumental dialogue* where the conversation, which is no longer a goal in itself, or a joint search for a truth, but a means serving the researcher’s ends, is instrumentalized.
- *The interview may be a manipulative dialogue* where the interviewer may want to obtain information without the interviewee knowing what the interviewer is after, attempting to – in Shakespeare’s terms – “By indirections find directions out.” Since this thesis is not after crucial information of hotels or personally interviewees, I have personally not experienced this fact during the interview process. What I, as interviewer, proposed to discover was obvious and clear for interviewees.
- *The interviewer’s monopoly of interpretation.* The interviewer generally upholds a monopoly of interpretation over the interviewee’s statements in social science research

whereas in daily conversations, as well as in philosophical dialogues, there may be a conflict over the true interpretation of what has been said. After gathering the necessary data from interviewees, this is where it begins to interpret variety of results in order to end up with empirical results from primary resource. As Kvale indicates that it is in the nature of social science where it is difficult to interpret truly in other kinds of dialogues.

3.3.1 A Semi – Structured Interview

Semi – structured interviews were selected as the means of data collection because of two primary considerations. Firstly, they are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification for answers. It is clearly stated that one of the main positive input of this type of interviewing is to enable interviewer to adjust points and to provide freedom on structuring the interview which may possible lead creativity. During interviewing process of this thesis, I had chance to adjust on some questions, and corrections to clarify questions according to reactions of interviewees each time. For instance, since from the first interview in Turkey, I directed the question of ‘Emotional Aspects of Communication through Social Media’ in order to discover possibly differences and similarities on approaches to online communications in Turkey and Norway where the cultural norms are different than each other. Second of all, the varied professional, educational and personal histories of the sample group precluded the use of a standardized interview schedule (Louise Barriball & White, 1994, p.330). This was also another fact that as interviewer I struggled to schedule interviews with the interviewees who are high – degree professionals of hospitality industry.

3.4 Ethics

As Brinkmann & Kvale (2005, p.157) indicate that the qualitative research interview probes human existence in detail and it allows access to subjective experiences as well as

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researchers to describe intimate aspects of people's life worlds. Consequently, qualitative research is saturated with moral and ethical issues. The aim of which here is to follow ethical issues which were of course taken into consideration within this thesis and the criteria for evaluating ethical issues that follow are stated by Black (2001) as; (1) Ethical standards met and data sufficiently confidential that no individuals or institutions can be identified which is also ensured during the interviews by stating that "...interview will be completely confidential and anonymous. Company names and information will definitely not present within the study and the interview will be recorded via audio recorder" in information part for interviewees, (2) Some weakness in maintaining confidentiality, (3) Ethical issues not addressed or confidentiality not discussed or maintained when it should have been e.g. permission from appropriate persons acquired, no information released that would allow individuals or institutions to be identified, (4) Ethical issues not addressed and/or significant loss of confidentiality, lastly (5) Ethical standards violated and/or subjects endangered owing to no confidentiality.

I as researcher followed the ways of learning to thicken events to help us act morally by Brinkmann & Kvale (2005, p.177 – 178) which are *contextualization*, describing events in their right context, *narrativize*, managing to pull together a convincing narrative that situates an event temporally, so that there is rarely need to engage in further moral deliberation about what to do, and finally *focusing on the particular example*, that is that the qualitative researcher should know about exemplars of ethically justifiable, and also ethically questionable research, in order to evaluate own practice and learn to recognize ethical issues.

3.5 Conducting Interview

There are important issues which should be considered seriously while conducting interviews. As moral facts are mentioned in "Ethics" parts and it is mentioned in "Interview" part how it is important for both interviewer and interviewee to follow certain rules during the

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interview process in order to gain possibly most effective outcomes. In the research of Birch & Miller (2000, p.194 – 195), they found that ‘success’ of an interview was informally judged in terms of participants constructing narratives of experiences, that may or may not previously have been voiced. In the interviews, I as researcher was always after experiences of interviewees which were not voiced before because I believe that those unique outcomes make the differences and enable researchers to have successful results. Birch & Miller added that telling experiences must be more ‘real’ if there are feelings and emotions behind such an account; in addition to that, judging the authenticity of narratives as the presentation of an individual ‘self’, they found that this sense of self was also more compelling if it was found to resonate with those other participants. Regarding to this point, I listened experiences fully surrounded with emotions and feelings of participants while telling stories related to interview questions which in my opinion enrich the research outcomes. Furthermore, there is another crucial aspect here as “trust” in the environment. Kvale (2006, p.482) states that creating trust through a personal relationship serves as a means to efficiently obtain disclosure of the interview subjects’ worlds. In parallel to that, the interviewer may, with a charming, gentle, and client – centered manner, create a close personal encounter where the subjects unveil their private worlds. Therefore, all the interviews were taken in the lobby part of the hotels where participants would easily feel more relaxed and not to take it very formal which may cause them not to express themselves easily. Also, at the very beginning of each interview, I asked mostly participants’ personal thoughts on social media and personal preferences followed by ‘Why’ questions as kind of ‘warming up’ process just to make them feel comfortable and relaxed before getting into depth questions because I was very aware of importance of having close relations with the participants. However, some challenges occurred during the process of conducting the interviews as an example that there was a case during the interview process with Organization D (Turkey) where I was not allowed to record interview, but asked to write

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all the notes down manually. This may have caused that I missed some crucial information while writing it down.

3.5.1 Sample

After determining what the purpose of the research is, the reader of a report must answer another question: to whom are the results intended to apply? Or to what group will the conclusions be justifiably relevant? (Black, 2001) Choosing a study sample is an important step in any research project as it is rarely practical, efficient or ethical to study whole populations (Marshall, 1996, p.522). However, the flexibility of sampling in qualitative studies may be confusing for some researchers and mistakes may be made (Coyne, 1997, p.623).

Qualitative research is epistemologically grounded in social constructivist, symbolic interactionist, or other interpretive conceptual frameworks, or perspectives; in addition to that, it can traverse a range of information gathering and analysis methods, which have an impact on how participants are selected, and when data collection should stop (Cleary et al. 2014, p. 473). There are six criteria for qualitative sampling interpreted by Curtis et al (2000, p.1003) and carefully followed in the sampling process of this thesis study is as follows: (1) the sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research. As managers who are responsible for social media at their hotels are asked for interviews, (2) the sample should be likely to generate rich information on the type of phenomena which need to be studied; therefore, employees on managerial levels whom have management control over particular investigated topic were chosen as participants of this thesis interviews, (3) the sample should enhance the '*generalizability*' of the findings therefore only managerial level interviewees of the hotels in similar segment were determined as sample group in the thesis, (4) the sample should produce believable descriptions / explanations in the sense of being true to real life. Consequently, the real – time examples

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were sometimes provided by interviewees to strengthen the statements, (5) the sample strategy should be ethical, and finally (6) the sampling plan should be feasible. In the chapter of 'Sample Presentation' each organization that participated in interviews will be marked as *Organization A* to *Organization D* in either Turkey (4 informants) or Norway (4 informants) as a place where interviews were conducted will be specified next to each organization marks during the presentations of samples.

3.5.2 Reliability and Validity

Reliability, recognized as pertaining to the stability of data – collection measures, remains an important notion and rather than attempting to hide behind a smokescreen of synonyms, perhaps interpretive researchers should simply to accept the fact that reliability is unlikely to be demonstrable strength of their work (Long & Johnson, 2000, p.31). It is always a questionable if the research would be ended up with same outcomes for the second time under exactly the same conditions. Since this is qualitative study which rely much on personal interactions especially during the interviewing process; therefore, it is hard to claim a certain outcomes for the same repeated researches. In this study, reliability was attempted through establishing a chain of evidence by keeping the data material in its original form, so it is accessible to other researchers, and by providing a detailed description of the research process, from the data gathering to final interpretations (Linge, 2015, p.93). Linge (2015, p.92) also points out the importance of transferability for reliability of researches stating as whether the results of a study can be transferred to similar cases and contexts. In this thesis, findings may be useful for related researchers in the future. However, it is impossible to state that outcomes will exactly be same each time since it is not possible to keep the affecting elements stable while conducting the interviews.

The most common definition of validity as Kvale (1994, p.166 - 167) express by the question: Are we measuring what we think we are measuring? In addition to that, a broader conception

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of validity pertains to whether a method investigates what it purports to investigate and to the extent to which observations reflect the phenomenon of interest. On one hand, validity concerns truth and involves accounting for why some issues are included while others are not such as certain informants' statements (Linge, 2015, p.91). In addition to that, Linge links 'credibility' as in validity of the research stating that "Credibility has to do with how accurately the object of study is described and identified, and ensuring that one is actually studying what one intended to study." (Linge, 2015, p.91) Therefore, I explained briefly to every interviewee what I meant by stating 'communication competence' before I asked the question during the interview process in order to provide practical and basic explanation for interviewees which I believed led me to have related, useful replies.

3.5.3 Data Analysis

According to LeCompte (2000, p.146) good qualitative data are as unbiased as possible; however, data selections are sometimes made because such data are collected by human beings, and because people are interested in certain things and not others which in summary affect the usefulness and credibility of research results. When collecting the data for this thesis, I as researcher always tried to have no bias and neutral as much as possible considering all those facts that might likely affect data collections processes which some of them are explained and stated under this chapter. Since I as all other human beings do have feelings and it was after all not possible to be fully without bias. However, as I stated that I tried my best as data collector to stand in the same distance to each of interviewees.

The creativity in qualitative research does not end with analysis and interpretation; furthermore, once the researcher has converted the data into findings, the challenge is to convey the findings in a way that will be useful to the reader, in short the researcher has to become a storyteller (Jacelon & O'Dell, 2005, p.219). Crane (2010, p.2 – 5) explains detailed 'Analyzing Process' consisting of five steps which are as firstly; (1) 'Getting to know the

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data’ – means that researcher listens the recordings as I did several times for good understanding the data; (2) ‘Focusing on the analysis’ – reviewing the purpose of the evaluation and identifying a few key questions as I have divided questions by each headline which are all reviewed in the literature part of the thesis not to let possible missing important points out in the analysis; (3) ‘Categorizing the information’ – identifying themes or patterns and organizing them into coherent categories as I have assigned different highlighting colors regarding to each information categories when analyzing the outcomes; (4) ‘Identifying patterns and connections within and between categories’ – while organizing the data into categories, patterns and connections both within and between the categories might likely to be seen; finally (5) ‘Interpretation’ – attaching meaning and significance to the analysis which is in fact the crucial part of the data analysis that actually specialize the study.

3.5.4 Sample Presentation

As it is indicated in ‘Ethics’ that names of organizations will remain anonymously and each organization will be assigned with representative marks as stated in ‘Sample’ chapter that will vary from ‘*Organization A*’ to ‘*Organization D*’ including the statement of each country next to it. Furthermore, the letters only represent chronological order of conducting the interviews. Interviews began in Turkey firstly before Norway, so that *Organization A (Turkey)* to *Organization D (Turkey)* will be firstly mentioned and in follow to that, Organization A (Norway) to Organization D (Norway) will be detailed.

Organization A (Turkey):

(*One Asst. GM and one PR manager*)

The Assistant General Manager (Informant A) has been working in the hotel since 2011 and he previously held General Manager and Director of Operations positions in the hotel located in Southern part of Turkey specializing sun and beach / leisure holidays. On one hand, Public

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Relations Manager (Informant B) who has master degree hospitality degree acquired in the United States has also been working in the hotel since 2011 and he has previous experiences also in operations and public relations departments in various hotels operating in Turkey.

Organization B (Turkey):

(*One Marketing manager*)

The marketing manager has a degree from a very reputable university in Turkey in international relations field and she has been in the hotel since graduated for almost more than 10 years, and promoted as manager for 4 years ago, responsible for public relations also beside marketing activities in the hotel.

Organization C (Turkey):

(*One General Manager*)

General Manager is not Turkish citizen and he has been in the hotel chain for more than 20 years. GM who holds Business Administration bachelor degree has been promoted in this hotel in Izmir just a year ago, and having international background in the career.

Organization D (Turkey):

(*One General Manager*)

General Manager is from Canada who has promoted to lead of the biggest hotels in Izmir, Turkey for 2 years ago. He holds a degree from one of the most reputable hospitality school in Canada and very experience within hospitality industry with almost 30 years of experience in the field. There was a conflict of confidentiality that I was not allowed to record interview, but asked to write it down manually which caused me as researcher miss out some important outcomes. Therefore, interview did not take a long time compared to the other interviews, and I, as researchers, could not take much notes.

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Organization A (Norway):

(One General Manager)

General Manager is responsible for two hotels of the chain both located in the city center of Stavanger and has been sitting in the position as GM since 2013. She has experience in hospitality industry for 20 years where began the career as dishwasher in the restaurant as claimed.

Organization B (Norway):

(One General Manager)

General Manager has been working for one of the leading hotel chains of Scandinavia since graduated from reputable hospitality school of Norway for almost 15 years ago. Moreover, he is in the position since 2011.

Organization C (Norway):

(One General Manager)

The Manager is over 60 years old and one of the most experienced one in hospitality industry in Norway with various experiences as leader, manager, and many other supervisor positions in globally structured hotel chains in the past. He works for this hotel chain since 2013 and clearly has control over all outgoing communication and marketing activities.

Organization D (Norway):

(One Front Office Manager)

The manager has been employed by the hotel since last year 2014 and this is the first managerial position acquired. She has economy related background studies in Oslo and has been in Stavanger since 2011. The manager has full control on social media activities at the hotel. However, the interview with her at this hotel was very short compared to other

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interviews. The reason was that the hotel is currently not very active on social media, plus that the manager is also new in this channel. Therefore, the answers to the questions were short and not as much descriptive as the rest of answers of other interviewees.

4. FINDINGS

As mentioned the findings of interviewees will be summarized before moving into Discussion part where quotations of interviewees will mostly be stated, it is beneficial to first go through what interviewees in each hotels (8) both in Turkey and Norway have claimed about certain particular issues which were directed during the interviews.

4.1 Definition of Social Media

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A defined social media as an online tool actively being used in every area of people – oriented activities and summarizes as it is an indispensable part of our daily life communication.

Organization B (Turkey):

Social media is a platform which enables the easiest way of building relationships in possibly the most visible and direct version.

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant defined it as ‘Future’ and continued as “*it is a very fast growing communication tool. There is no more boundaries, distances among people. Whoever believes opposite, one is too late for success.*”

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Organization D (Turkey):

“Social media is a platform where you integrate with others, and it can easily affect too much on personal lives. In order words, it is all about money.” commented by informant.

Organization A (Norway):

Informant pointed out as *“social media is ease of reaching out to someone without having meeting in person and a platform for both one – way and two – way communication possibilities.”*

Organization B (Norway):

Informant commented on that *“it is a channel where editors do not have influence on the content but users who define and choose what to be included in there. It is basically user – controlled platform.”*

Organization C (Norway):

Informant stated that we currently live in communication age social media is a key in building relationships and socializing among others.

Organization D (Norway):

Informant stated that *“social media is new generation communication tool among people in today’s world where there is no limit or standards of information.”*

4.2 Frequency / Purpose / Motivation of Social Media Usage in Private

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A believes in using Facebook most actively, but in overall does not think self as an active social media user at all in private life. The reason of usage as Informant A stated is to

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“reach daily news surrounding us in the most accurate, reliable and fastest way which after all motivates me for using Social Media in my private life”. Moreover, Informant A states that *“I am definitely motivated to use social media!”*

Organization B (Turkey):

Informant stated that *“I personally use Instagram and Twitter in private. I try to ignore usage of Facebook since it has begun too much integration within people’s personal lives and privacies which damages my motivation to use Facebook.”* Her main purpose of usage is to reach out accurate news in the fastest way possible. Furthermore, informant specified that *“Sometimes without even going through news sites, I primarily log in to my twitter account.”*

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant stated on using Facebook at most in private and added that *“it all depends on what you expect on usage. Facebook is as example very active tool, if you want networking. He applies social media to connect with people, especially locals because it is a trend. Informant describes himself as motivated user “...because it is fun and even challenging sometimes. You have chance to communicate with anyone at anytime which was not even case only a few years ago! It is much faster and funnier though.”*

Organization D (Turkey):

Informant uses Facebook only with a fake name just in order to follow up his friends, and family members, but has never been active user and does not have a motivation for that either.

Organization A (Norway):

Informant uses Facebook and Snapchat mostly in private and she definitely likes to use it for mostly communication purposes. However she is currently not happy how important social media is becoming more and more in people’s everyday lives.

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Organization B (Norway):

Informant stated that he uses Facebook and Snapchat because of its' entertainments, practical use, informative structure after all he says *“it allows you to keep in touch with people you do not actually meet every day.”* He believes that he understands the concept standing behind social media and he likes it! However, he points out that *“I do not find it interesting when I see too much personal information posted about one on my wall such as picture of a new car. In contrast, I would prefer to see once in a life time, interesting things, and experiences, not the new house or car.”*

Organization C (Norway):

Informant applies Facebook and Twitter mostly because of its' broader and more active users to reach news on his interested topics in the fastest and right way. Moreover, the purpose of his usage is basically to connect with outside world without any limits. He feels motivated every time observing dynamism in outcomes.

Organization D (Norway):

Informant has a profile but not active only on Facebook which was created less than a year ago to follow trends and the hotel's page on Facebook as responsible manager of social media. Therefore, as she claims *“It is some sort of business related that can be said. I have actually never been interested in social media and currently do not feel in need of social media in my life. If maybe I knew more about them, I would be more motivated to use them.”*

4.3 Social Media Importance for Tourism Industry

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A perceives Social Media as people – oriented channel that is called “Tailor – Made” which likely increases the awareness and credibility in tourism industry that is very

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much innovative and open to development. He stated *“it is very important to show what has been improved and succeeded within your organization to outside in the tourism market and this is where social media becomes very useful and powerful for organizations in tourism industry.”*

Organization B (Turkey):

Informant strongly thinks that social media is incredibly important for tourism industry. She also thinks that tourism professionals are responsible for destination marketing and gives an example of recent active on social media accounts *“we are the main financial and accommodation sponsor of the project called ‘City of Izmir’ which is an Instagram account that proposes inviting famous bloggers from both Turkey and foreign countries to Izmir to enable them post interesting things online about Izmir.”*

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant commented on that issue as *“when you have almost 30% of whole planet on social media, it cannot be ignored that tourism industry is definitely connected to social media.”* Moreover, he pointed out the importance of ‘Generation Y’ in Tourism industry in relation to social media and mentioned that *“Generation Y is located in the majority part of travelling industry recently and those travelers want to share what they eat, where they spend the night, or where they go with others. This makes social media very important for tourism industry in a way that cannot even be discussed.”*

Organization D (Turkey):

Informant mentioned that *“It is just important as much as for other customer service – based industries.”*

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Organization A (Norway):

Informant thinks social media is very important for tourism thanks to pure and real information either negative or positive moves faster than ever. She gives an example *“when I go to vacation, I upload images with friends through Instagram which are totally real – time experienced pictures, not the fake illustrated ones people see in magazines.”* In addition to that, informant suggested that social media becomes even more important for tourism when it comes to destination marketing. She also stated *“Nowadays, travelers seek to have more experiences on adventures or cultural decorations than a good food or wine. Why would any Chinese come to Stavanger without knowing ‘Pulpit Rock’?”*

Organization B (Norway):

Informant pointed out the importance of social media for tourism industry as stating *“nowadays everything you prepare for travel, as many of us you spend much time on the internet, seeking information of third opinions, feedbacks. It is not enough for travel seeker today to hear good comments from sales person in the travel agency, but ratings on feedback sites.”* He also mentioned another importance that people want to discover more unknown spots of destinations not just regularly visited ones, so that they feel in need of connecting with travelers who previously visited.

Organization C (Norway):

Informant believes that social media allows companies in tourism industry including hotels to promote products and services for reasonable costs which also have begun to increase lately in accordance with increase in demand. He also points out as *“A specific announcement can easily be reached out to pre – determined target audience.”*

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Organization D (Norway):

Informant commented that social media is definitely important for tourism industry as informative platform for tourists. She also gave an example *“For instance, guests from Asia come to Stavanger mainly for ‘Pulpit Rock’ and think that they can drive up there, or walk with high heels shoes. They are not aware of its tough route up there. Our intention here is to inform them as local hotel and we made a four minutes video, visualizing a hike to ‘Pulpit Rock’. Then we posted it on our website as well as Facebook page.”*

4.4 Social Media Management

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A specified that social media is mainly based on receiving feedbacks. In addition to that, he suggested that management could be also different within different segment hotels such as resort or city hotels. He thinks that the most important issue for tourism management is ‘Accuracy’ that is valid for social media too. Informant A also stated that it is not right where unfiltered information is provided through social media to the market just to reach large audiences.

Additionally, Informant B stated that there is always a plan and added that hotel chains have traditions and norms that should be followed. Informant B specified in detail as *“managing social media consists of two parts; increasing awareness and sales / marketing. Public Relations department is responsible for social media and occasionally cooperates with outsource social media advisory firms on a project – based”* However, he believes that social media should mainly and definitely managed internally to ensure good relations with the customers. Informant B finds social media as an interesting platform, a show of a good faith as an example of user – friendly TripAdvisor. However, he thinks that social media should be analyzed carefully against negative intentions to ignore misunderstandings in online platform

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and gave an example “*Answering against room request by a girl under legal age with her boyfriend may be perceived as you condemn it; whereas, positive answer may be perceived as supporting illegal issues*”

Organization B (Turkey):

Informant pointed out the importance of three core social media accounts; Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram together with Foursquare and Pinterest in which are not applied as much as the other three. She specified the importance of Instagram as stating “*Instagram is lately the most exciting channel for us where visuals play the crucial role and that are the shortest cut to spread the most essence and effective message to end – users especially in the tourism industry.*” Another important aspect during the management period as stated by the informant is to have either positive or negative feedbacks through social media tools which motivate the team every time. Informant stated that social media planning is divided into four quarters during a year where next quarter’s activities are planned in advance.

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant explained the management as sales and marketing department especially ‘*Marketing Senior Executive*’ is in charge of social media in accordance with corporate standards of the chain. He also commented on thoughts of how social media should be managed as “*I believe, there should be good content which is direct, short, and effective. There is no doubt that pictures play crucial role. It is not that difficult nowadays to have 500+ likes, but important to communicate frequently. There are three key aspects in managing social media; frequency, content, and visuals; furthermore, complementary parts are page setup, and answering process to questions, comments etc.*”

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Organization D (Turkey):

Informant mentioned on having definite rules and regulations on usage of social media within the chain globally and specified with an example *“No employees can share any picture taken inside the hotel without permission from supervisors. We are very sensitive on privacy of our guests as well as the environment inside and do not want to let any of employees damage it. In the hotel, guests should definitely feel secured about personal lives just like at home.”*

Organization A (Norway):

Informant stated that social media at the hotel is applied to reach customers, to promote ourselves, and to communicate internally and externally, also added that each hotel within the chain is responsible for own Instagram and Facebook pages by following corporate guidelines; however, web page and online promotions as Google adverts are managed by headquarters. She focuses more on interesting ideas online and stated that *“when we announce discounts online, we get around five (5) likes out of 70 reviews because people are nowadays more interested on seeing us at workplace. For instance, our hotel manager took off his glasses and held bunch of eggs within huge plate. We asked how many eggs are there. People were insane on answering as we got 300,000 comments and 2200 likes! This was actually in my opinion meaningless, but this is how it goes nowadays. You must follow trends up – to – date before they are gone.”*

Organization B (Norway):

Informant stated that each hotel within the chain is responsible for own social media accounts as they have a page on Facebook. Informant specified an interesting point that the guests are mostly business – related coming to Stavanger for conferences or meetings because it is practical for them to go for meetings with a very short range distance or some firms have arrangements with headquarters. He sometimes even says that *‘This is a hotel where you*

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actually do not want to stay’ and added that guests therefore are not very active on social media specifically stating “Once considering all those facts that we still have not decided at the hotel whether we should keep our Facebook page as informative including basic information but dead site, or more active updating regularly for more promotional purposes. Today, we use social media more for informative purposes (opening hours, contact information, pictures etc.)”

Informant believes in ‘Honesty’ and ‘Naturalness’ in managing social media accounts and specified that *“If social media is used for marketing and advertising, it should be active and updated, otherwise it may damage honesty of the company. I personally do not trust online social media adverts and believe that social media should be managed internally Companies should also not be on social media just to be there such as ‘Rema 1000’ on Twitter.”*

Organization C (Norway):

Informant manages social media management within two parts; communication and promotion. Moreover, he believes that online platforms where people freely share thoughts and emotions without insulting another should be created, giving example as *“We have invited former 9 managers who worked at this hotel’s management team in the past, whom were my colleagues mostly, through Facebook channel where we created event page for audience average age of probably 60! This summarizes basically how social media management should be taken care of.”*

Organization D (Norway):

Informant mentioned that they use Facebook mostly at work followed by Tripadvisor. She claimed that they also have Instagram and Twitter accounts; however, they are not active. In fact, she informed that every hotel within the chain is responsible for own social media accounts in accordance with the corporate guidelines whereas websites are totally controlled

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by headquarters. She personally shares and posts things on Facebook daily at work and added that *“Social media in general should be applied to get the offers out and communicate with outside world; in short, mostly for informative or/and promotional basis.”*

4.5 Social Media in Internal Communication

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A stated that mailing and interphones at the present time are still the most common ways of communication within hotels in Turkey and added that having internal communications through social media may not be useful since others are not to use it on the same extent as you do. Consequently, he specified that social media is more applied on external communication in their hotel. He also commented on chatting through Facebook during working hours as *“I strongly believe that communication should not be limited at any cases. There are definitely confidential rules which must be followed. People are very motivated to use social media nowadays which almost makes limitation on usage impossible. When YouTube was blocked by the government in Turkey, everyone kept on accessing it through various online ways.”* He suggests that it is more effective to apply on turning usage into positive aspects instead of limiting it. Therefore, services that are provided by humans should not be robotized in the new management approach.

Organization B (Turkey):

Informant stated that there is internal Facebook page which was created by Human Resources department only for employee – related surveys and announcements. She commented that they also use intranet systems for both chatting called ‘Communicator’ and one – way communication ‘One Zone’ where employees from all the hotels belong to the chain in the world share posts and contexts. She personally pointed out *“I do not prefer ‘Communicator’,*

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but reach out directly to colleagues since we all work in tourism industry where 'Human Touch' plays a crucial role."

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant believes that they are still not there to use social media effectively for internal communications, plus that they do have intranet systems both internally within this hotel and with other chain hotels regionally which none of them are actually connected to social media. He strongly thinks that social media will take bigger parts in internal communications in near future and gave an example as *"We started communication as General Managers of fifty (50) Eastern Europe Hotels through a platform on Facebook called 'Innovation – Eastern Europe'. I believe that it will begin firstly by departments. In summary, media itself is very creative and likely to change. This is the future."*

Organization D (Turkey):

Informant commented that they currently do not apply social media for internal communication because there is no need for that since they have intranet systems where they post, share things among employees.

Organization A (Norway):

Informant stated that the main communication within the hotel chain is e-mails, plus that they have intranet system called 'The Wall' where employees can write to their leaders, or be updated by the latest news. They have Facebook group only for employees and that is mainly used to communicate each other, without very serious issues. She specified that everybody at the present has Facebook account and check it more than e – mails obviously. In addition to that, not everyone has e – mails on their phones, but Facebook. She thinks that it is faster to communicate through Facebook, and you can see how many and who sees the post. In another

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perspective, she sees social media beneficial for each department to show off what they do to other departments because she thinks that Pictures often mean more than thousands of words, and it is very much possible in communication through social media. She gives an example that *“we will soon have online common meeting with other hotels in Norway through Skype.”* Informant also does not block employees to use Facebook for anything they want during the working hours as long as they complete all their duties on the time and mentioned that *“every employee should read the guidelines on what to share or not. It has been only a problem once within my 20 years hospitality career.”*

Organization B (Norway):

Informant pointed out the fact that they actually apply social media more for internal communication purposes. They have a page on Facebook for employees. As long as the information is not serious, they all firstly prefer to share things on the page, if it is serious, mailing is used. Additionally, they have another broader page on Facebook where there are all employees of hotel chain in Stavanger which is more for entertainment purposes such as announcing that there are two concert tickets for those who call first. Furthermore, he stated that he shares good stories or sends greetings to employees who have showed great performance lately through social media whereas he also posts negative things with the explanation or announce stopping an operation with the reasons to employees. He believes social media is very useful for internal communications of companies since everyone has at least one. Informant also commented on Facebook chat usage during working hours as *“I believe that we came too far at the recent days to block social media usage. In my opinion, employees can be online all day as long as they complete their duties right on time. It is totally fine for me. You even have social media on your watch today! How is it possible?”*

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Organization C (Norway):

Informant claimed that he manages internal communication still through e – mails or phone calls because there are not many people working at the hotel compared to competitor other local chain hotels, it has not been issue until now to communicate through e – mails or direct calls. In fact, informant specified that they apply social media more on external communications.

Organization D (Norway):

Informant stated that there is no social media platform used for internal communications at work because they already have one – way communicative intranet page for employees where they can see news for any department. Plus that, ‘*Microsoft Lync*’ is used for instant messaging among employees.” She also added that their policy is not to be online on any social platform while at work. However, she thinks that any employee could be online at anytime at work as long as they complete their duties right on time.

4.6 Social Media in External Communication

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A thinks that social media currently cannot be used very effectively compared to phone and e – mailing and stated that *Skype* may be used sometimes. For instance, they recently had online meeting with headquarters in America on *Skype* which instead used to be *MSN Messenger* to communicate with some clients in past. However, he specified that “*infrastructure and communities for rich social media communication is yet not well organized in Turkey, but ready for it once it becomes more popular in the market here. While MSN Messenger was popular among the community, we used to have B2B daily chats with*

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local travel agencies, creating demand which was effective way of B2B Win – to – Win concept.”

Organization B (Turkey):

Informant strongly agreed that social media is irrevocable for corporate awareness. As business concept hotel, communications with end – users including online comments cannot be in as soft way as resort hotels’ communications with guests.

She also summarized external communication management as *“loyalty programs for corporate firms to gain memberships are actively uploaded on our Facebook page.”* There are also tab applications where online visitors can share e – mails and even phone numbers through Facebook page. Informant also mentioned that *“Since we have been faced occasionally with such questions as ‘What can I do to work in your hotel?’ we have currently been working on a tab application where there will be very detailed information on employment process on Facebook page.”* Lastly, informant highlighted significant role of managing ‘Hashtag’ in external communication management.

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant stated that there are schedules for each department on sharing / uploading data on social media and he believes that traditional media will still continue for more years, even maybe forever because there are still lot readers out there who like to read books, magazines etc. Informant then added that *“I personally manage and answer every comment on Tripadvisor, booking.com as well by our ‘E – Commerce’ department which deal with digital media. Social media is important for external communication because it is a new generation, the fastest, and practical.”*

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Organization D (Turkey):

Informant commented on that as they are not very active on social media when it comes to communicating with guests. His assistant mainly deals with online posts or periodic promotions if necessary on special dates by always taking corporate rules and regulations into consideration.

Organization A (Norway):

Informant specified that *“social media communication that we actively use Facebook and Instagram (also have Twitter but I do not think people are interested in reading much these days) is preferred to reach out leisure segment customers.”* She mentioned that they do not use social media for corporate segment because corporate customers are usually negotiated with one person who is most of the time key account managers of the companies, plus that It is easy to reach out corporate customers.

Organization B (Norway):

Informant stated that they started on focusing Tripadvisor last fall, and they have been communication through feedbacks by answering all of them since they do not have many feedbacks compared to other hotels, approx. 5 – 6 ones per week. Furthermore, he clarified that *“the great benefit of social media on external communication today is admittedly ‘Feedbacks’. We now as service providers have chance to find out what guests like or dislike.”*

Organization C (Norway):

Informant stated that they still use e – mails and calls for communicating with stakeholders but they apply social media especially when they need to spread out information daily and quickly through their accounts mostly by attaching visuals as well. Once social media is

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effectively used for external communications, he believes that there would be outcomes way beyond our imaginations!

Organization D (Norway):

Informant commented that they basically communicate externally to promote Stavanger region such as ‘*Gladmat Festival*’ or ‘*Beach Volley Tournament*’ because they believe that more tourists spend night in Stavanger, their occupancy rates increase.

4.7 Actions to Improve Employees’ Communication Competence

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant A identified as “*I strongly think that trainings on improving communication competence of employees should take more serious part on educating staff by seminars or conferences. However, it is not considered seriously in Turkey yet.*”

Organization B (Turkey):

“*Yes, Definitely!*” claimed informant and added that they attend all social media conferences or they are trained by outsourced social media management firms once in a time when they used to work with them in the past. She specified that “*we organize regional meetings where employees of public relations department of all hotels belong to the chain in this region attend to brain storming activities and discuss up – to – date trends on social media to become more effective users.*”

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant claimed that technical knowledge, motivations and skills should grow in parallel to innovations in digital media, especially in social media. Moreover, he added that “*the world is changing incredibly fast; therefore, we need to renew ourselves as fast as that. Everyone at the hotel has Facebook accounts and currently we work on tablet stations to have it by*

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departments. In this hotel, we try to keep social media responsible up – to – date. For instance, ‘Senior Marketing Executive’ was in Istanbul to attend social media trainings lately.”

Organization D (Turkey):

Informant replied that because they are not an active user of social media at work, they do currently not have conferences, seminars, or trainings to improve competence of employees on social media. Plus, at this present everyone has adequate knowledge on social media as he observes. His assistant shows self effort to improve the skills and knowledge in order to fulfill given assignments.

Organization A (Norway):

Informant said that she believes employees should be happy and proud of where they work which motivates them to share things, communicate positively with outside. Therefore, they have launched online social project called ‘Culture Club’ where employees periodically share their own cultural aspects since they have employees from various countries of the world. She added that this kind of projects lead employees to practice in using social media more effectively.

Organization B (Norway):

Informant stated that *“As I mentioned earlier the way our hotel operates today does not require much effort on social media. Therefore, we have not done or planned for such trainings on communication competence of employees.”*

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Organization C (Norway):

Informant commented that there has not been taken any actions until now on this issue since they are not active on social media to supply trainings and professional supports to employees.

Organization D (Norway):

Informant stated that there has not been any action on improving competency of social media usage of employees including her until now. She added that the hotel is online on Facebook since two years ago which means that they are new in social media platforms compared to other hotels in the region. Since she started this position almost a year ago, she follows guidelines and ask responsible department in headquarters for any issue. Lastly, she mentioned that *“If we improve ourselves maybe in the future, some actions on improving competency of employees’ social media skills may likely be taken.”*

4.8 Emotional Aspects of Communication through Social Media

Organization A (Turkey):

Informant B pointed out the fact that ‘*reliability*’ of preferred social media channels by your side are important and added that *“we live in information age where people have chance to indirectly communicate with you by accessing feedbacks / comments about your hotel and people find those thoughts quite reliable. I personally do not believe that it causes negative aspect; conversely, people are pleased to interact with service provider directly or indirectly as end – users.”*

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Organization B (Turkey):

Informant stated that *“I would probably comment on this negatively six years ago, but social media now allows you to reach direct feedbacks in the fastest way which helps you to improve your product and services in accordance with guests’ concerns or suggestions.”*

Organization C (Turkey):

Informant strongly thinks that negative aspects are out of a question in Turkey regarding to social media and specified that *“Turkish people are very much into social media because they choose to be in. The crucial point here is how you as service provider communicate with the local society. Language, content, style and many other aspects influence perceptions. Traditional one – to – one communication still is important which cannot be ignored. However, social media is a platform where people freely choose to be in.”*

Organization D (Turkey):

Informant gave a shortcut answer on this by stating *“No. I do not think that there is any negative aspect.”*

Organization A (Norway):

Informant commented on that issue *“As long as you put smiley emoticon at the end of your message, I do not think it creates any negative aspects because in Norway we do not like to be very social, maybe it is because we are a bit shy people. Therefore, communication through social media is a trend especially in Norway.”*

Organization B (Norway):

Informant believes that there is definitely no negative emotional aspects in today’s world in Norway and stated that *“The only problem when communication through machines may be*

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misunderstandings of feelings while communicating. As long as there is smiley emoticon, I believe that there is no problem at all!”

Organization C (Norway):

Informant pointed out that *“people who choose to be in social media are communicated through social media. Why would it be a problem? I strongly believe that there is none of negative aspects in today’s world, especially in Norway.”*

Organization D (Norway):

Informant declared that *“I see both negative and positive on that. I believe it all depends on when it is applied and for what purposes it is used. There are still times maybe rarely that require face – to – face communication. However, many people are active users on social media now. In summary, there is no specific negative issue on that as long as social media is used appropriately.”*

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Definition of Social Media

Social media is defined and perceived not exactly in the same way but very similar to each other among most of the participant managers. As Leonardi & Steinfield (2013, p.2) defined social media as a platform upon which social interaction occurs rather than functioning as a channel through which communication travels and enterprises, Informant A in Organization A (Turkey) and informant in Organization C (Turkey) perceive and define social media as a fast growing and *‘easy way of communication tool’* without no boundaries and distances. In parallel to that, informant in Organization A (Norway) also point out the ease of social media for *‘both one – way and two – ways communication’* tools and mention

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that there is a big favor of social media that actually does not require meeting in person but communicate through devices. In addition to that, informant in Organization D (Norway) defines social media as *'new generation communication tool.'*

Informants in Organization B (Turkey) and Organization C (Norway) perceive and define social media as a key in *'building relationships'* and *'socializing'* with others. On the other hand, there were some different approaches to definition of social media apart from the highlighted points of *'communication'* and *'relationships'*. Informant in Organization D (Turkey) mention about integration with others when was asked to define social media, but mainly perceive social media as a *'platform of all about money.'* This was an interesting fact as an answer among the other participants as well as Informant in Organization B (Norway) commented on definition of social media as *"a channel where editors do not have influence on the content but users..."*

As in summary, managers in both Norway and Turkey define social media as a tool for communication because of its limitless access and ease of use. Additionally, some managers also perceive social media as platform for building relationships and socialization. However, informant of Organization D (Turkey) sees social media as a money platform which was a unique definition among definitions. It is possible to claim that majority of informants are aware of social media and define it as communication tool. Moreover, some of others point out social media importance on relationships.

5.2 Frequency / Purpose / Motivation of Social Media Usage in Private

It was also important to discover if those managers who deal with social media at work are actually motivated and active frequent users in private as well as to find out the purposes of usage outside work. First of all, it is possible to say that the frequency of usage in private depends very much on individuals without even taking loads of social media usage at work place into consideration. Four informants in total claimed that they use it as much as

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others do or even some stated that they use it very frequently in private whereas half of the interviewees said that they are not active users of social media in private at all. Moreover, frequency levels of social media usage in private among managers are according to the results not related to whether one lives in Turkey or Norway. The interesting fact here is that even though some interviewees such as informant A in Organization A (Turkey) are very motivated to use social media, that informant is not an active user in private life. That means that managers may have to deal very much with social media at work and that causes lack of usage need outside of work.

The second aspect of this part after frequency of usage in private is motivational level of informants. Apart from informants in Organization D (Turkey) and Organization D (Norway) who are also not active users, all of the remaining informants (six) claimed that they are definitely motivated for social media. There is most of the time positive relationship between the frequency of social media usages and motivational levels among informants. However, the exciting point that has to be highlighted is that informant A from Organization A (Turkey) and informant from Organization B (Norway) are not active users in private at all even though they are actually motivated to use social media. This means that it is likely possible to discover motivated users sometimes may apply social media rarely in private because of various reasons.

Finally, the purposes of usage may differ among managers even though there are also common usage purposes which are mentioned. The most common purposes of usage are ‘*reaching news*’ mentioned by Informant A from Organization A (Turkey) as well as informants from Organization B (Turkey) and Organization C (Norway), and ‘*communication with people*’ stated by informants of Organization C (Turkey), Organization A (Norway) and Organization C (Norway). The other aims of social media usage are listed as; *following trends, following up friends and family members, entertainment, and seeking information*. The

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common aspect among various aims of usage is that social media makes particular purpose of usage easy and fast as well as more accurate compare to traditional media as most claimed. To sum up, it is possible to observe that one of most common reason of usage is for communication among informants which proves how important social media is perceived in relation to communication in private lives of hotel managers.

5.3 Social Media Importance for Tourism Industry

There is none of interviewees think that social media is not important for tourism industry in accordance with Leung et al. (2013, p.18) claimed that hospitality and tourism organizations can no longer ignore the rising popularity of social media nor their role in travelers' travel planning process. Descriptions such as 'useful', 'powerful', 'informative' are expressed to highlight importance of social media for tourism industry. Female informants of Organization B (Turkey) and Organization A (Norway) pointed out social media importance on '*destination marketing*' specifically that enable them to promote the cities where their hotels are located which they believe in turn will increase occupancy rates of the hotels.

As Buhalis & Law (2008, p.611) mentioned '*price comparison sites*' among wide range of sophisticated tools, informant of Organization B (Norway) also pointed out the importance of social media by highlighting 'Feedback Sites' stating that travelers seek third person's opinions, not sales person in travel agencies. Informant in Organization C (Turkey) came up with statistics and stated that 30% of the planet are online and major part of travelers are 'Generation Y' who are very active on social media and like to share what they eat, where they stay and go out.

In addition to some of pointed out outcomes above, the other important aspects of social media in tourism industry are stated as; promoting products and services (Organization C –

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Norway), informative platform (Organization D – Norway), increasing awareness and credibility (Organization A – Turkey).

Even though reasons of perceiving social media as important aspect for tourism industry vary among managers, they are fully aware of high importance of social media, except from informant in Organization D (Turkey) who defended that social media is important for tourism industry just as much as other customer – service based industries.

5.4 Social Media Management

It is a common fact that every hotel is responsible for own social media platforms in accordance with ‘corporate guidelines’ and it is observed that social media is mainly applied as informative source which leads to increasing awareness and/or promotional source as in sales / marketing. It is possible to observe in general that hotels which are very much dependant on business clients are not active on social media just as the general manager in Organization B (Norway) sometimes says that *“this is a hotel where you actually do not want to stay!”*

Organization B in Norway and Organization A in Turkey clearly specified that social media should be managed internally at the hotel as stated by informant B in Organization A (Turkey) that it is not right trusting on someone outside of the hotel on relations with your own customers and an example was provided by the manager in Organization B (Norway) that *“...as we recently bought an ad on Facebook worth to 10,000 Norwegian Kroner for family Christmas tables and been informed by the agency that our advert has been reached out 200,000 people, but too few showed up. How was it reached out?”* Another common point of those two hotels as they both think social media management should be based on *honesty* and *accuracy*; additional *naturalness* stated by Organization B in Norway. The example given by informant in Organization B (Norway) supports naturalness in a way where

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he criticizes his one of competitor hotels behavior on TripAdvisor stating that “*I discovered that one of our competitor hotels copies exactly the same answer maybe with some very small changes and replies each comment in this way.*”

On the other hand, it is believed and suggested clearly by both hotels Organization B and C in Turkey that *visuals* play crucial role in social media management, given example of Instagram by Organization B (Turkey). In addition to visuals, the manager in Organization C (Turkey) also pointed out the importance of *frequency* as well as *content* which should be direct, short and effective in social media management.

Managers of Organization C in Turkey and Organization A in Norway highlighted the interest on *competitions* through social media such as asking number of eggs to followers online Organization A in Norway. Another example of that was given by Organization C in Turkey stated as “*we have arranged online competition and invited follower / members participate in to win prizes. After all, the interest was incredibly higher and we have had almost fully booked events lately due to the prices given for those activities and helped us announce them well.*”

As Noone et al. (2011, p.297) stated that actually a fact that the practice of ‘listening’ to the customer and using that information to inform decision makers is not new and the idea here is to augment traditional media with social media based customer feedbacks. Feedbacks are considered one of the major points in social media management as informant A of Organization A in Turkey stated that “*more you have feedbacks, more chance to renew and improve your hotel.*” as well as informant of Organization B in Turkey emphasized the hotel chain’s motto called ‘*Complaint is a gift*’. However, informant B in Organization A (Turkey) suggested that feedbacks should be considered carefully and avoid chatting into the middle of a polemic which may damage corporate brand as Georgescu and Popescul (2015, p.281)

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highlighted that ways of expressing opinions, developing a negative environment and rude, aggressive, vicious behavior on blogs, forums, and social networks should all be considered carefully by social media managements.

5.5 Social Media in Internal Communication

It can be observed that majority of the all hotels interviewed in Turkey and Norway use ‘Intranet Systems’ as one of the internal communication tools in own hotels. In addition to that four of those hotels; Organization B & C (Turkey), Organization A & B (Norway) which use ‘Intranet Systems’ also created internal “Facebook Page” to communicate within employees whereas, Organization A (Turkey) and Organization C (Norway) apply only e – mails and direct phones for internal communications.

Those of the hotels which do not apply social media for internal communications give reason of why not using as they do not need one since they already have either intranet systems or get along by using e – mails and phones. In addition to that, informant in Organization A (Turkey) claimed that they would be happy to use it as long as they make sure that everyone else is on the same extent in applying social media.

“Facebook” is the only social media platform which is used by those hotels as social media tool for internal communications. ‘Facebook Page’ is created for employees to share, post text or visuals. Only in Organization C (Turkey), Facebook Page is created for managers of Eastern Europe because as the informant claimed that *“However, we still do not apply social media in the hotel since it can easily be exposed outside and this might be very challenging sometimes”* In Organization B (Turkey), internal Facebook page is used usually for staff surveys, for instance; *“where would you like to have staff picnic this year?”* Or *“which one of the dishes would you like to see most in the staff cafeteria?”* Organization A and B in Norway clearly defined that internal Facebook page is never used for serious or confidential

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information, but for causal and entertaining purposes. Benefits of Facebook usage in internal communication are mentioned by those managers as it is faster communication because everyone has personal accounts on Facebook, possible to know who sees the post, sharing pictures that sometimes mean more than thousands of words, or enabling interactions between different departments. Also, general manager of Organization B (Norway) claimed that it is easy for manager to announce both negative and positive news with employees through Facebook page.

Except from Organization D (Turkey), all managers clearly stated that they are totally fine that employees communicate with each other via Facebook during working hours as long as the duties are completed right on time. It is possible to observe this mindset is in accordance with what Bob Carlwright, Mitchells & Butlers' communications director, believes that employee communication is a very important part of staff motivation and satisfaction; furthermore, there is a virtuous circle in which improving employee satisfaction leads to greater customer satisfaction, which in turn leads to sales growth and greater profits which, in turn, and should produce greater employee satisfaction (Farrant, 2003)

As a result, there seems to be no difference in approaching social media channels for internal communications between Turkey and Norway. In general, social media is yet not perceived as primary internal communication tool, but e – mails and phones. Moreover, if the hotel has internal Facebook page, it is never used for serious information that still goes through e – mails or direct phone calls, but for entertainment and daily communicative purposes as informant of Organization A (Norway) specified that “*we share things that would be good to be seen by employees but not necessity on our internal Facebook page.*”

5.6 Social Media in External Communication

It is possible to state that majority of the hotels are not active or do not think themselves as active firms when it comes to external communication. Those three hotels; Organization B and C in Turkey as well as Organization A in Norway, stated that they apply social media in regards to external communication due to the benefits of social media. Benefits are highlighted as; feedbacks – chance to discover what guests like or dislike, communicating with end – users directly through comments, faster, practical, new generations as well as enabling Business – to – Business (with travel agencies) direct communication through *Skype*.

The common point which is valid for all is that social media could be beneficial for also external communication just as it is for other aspects in business. However, there are some concerns; for instance, informant in Organization A (Turkey) believes that perceptual infrastructure for active usage is not ready yet in Turkey which blocks it to be used effectively in the current market; therefore, hotels apply social media very rarely.

Another important part here is the conflict in the perception of external communication which is often confused with promotions and marketing. This was also the case during the interviews as Organization D in Turkey claimed its' usage for promotions and Organization D in Norway stated the usage as promotion of Stavanger. On the other side, purposes that are apart from “promotion” or “marketing” are listed as; increasing corporate awareness, reaching out leisure segment but not corporate due to ease of reaching through other media types, and spreading out information (informative) in fast way.

Informant of Organization B in Turkey pointed out the importance of Facebook pages for hotels by stating that “...*communicating externally on Facebook page rather than website and suggested that the most important aspect in external communication through social*

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media is to apply right channels at the right time in a right way of doing it.” General Manager of Organization C in Turkey believes that traditional media will always be interesting for those who like to read and there will always be those kind of people around; in contrast to that, General Manager of Organization A in Norway claimed that they do not use *Twitter* actively because she believes that people are not much interested in reading these days.

As a result, there are no doubt managers of those hotels (likely that Organization D in Turkey is exceptional) are aware of the potential of social media but majority due to various reasons are still not active on social media in terms of external communication. Plus that, those active ones are actually focused on promotional or marketing – based activities while stating that they are active in external communication. It is possible to see ‘Feedbacks’ on Web 2.0 as the major impact of social media on external communication as Cmeciú et al. (2014, p.879 - 880) declared that public organizations using Web 2.0 strategies shape the new public space by providing another forum of deliberation, enhancing discussion, and a promoting democratic exchange of ideas and opinion.

Whenever a consumer or some other external stakeholder comes into contact with the company or company representative, they form new opinions, perceptions, and impressions of the company (Malmelin, 2007, p.305). Therefore, General Managers such as Organization C in Turkey or Organization B in Norway personally manage comments on social media to secure and have full control over impressions of their brands in the eyes of external stakeholders.

5.7 Actions to Improve Employees’ Communication Competence

Five out of eight hotels are not active on social media due to several reasons; therefore, those hotels claimed that they do have not taken or planned any action on improving social media communication competence of employees until present. Those more

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active hotels that also take some actions on this issue are Organization B and C in Turkey as well as Organization A in Norway. It can be seen out of those hotels that hotels in Turkey seem to be more active on social media which also lead them to take more actions on social media communication competence.

There is a common perspective stated by Organization B and D in Turkey that 'knowledge' of social media is already competent among employees as Marketing Manager in Organization B (Turkey) specified that "*Knowledge of social media especially in new generation is already competent since social media is a big part of our lives in the present time.*" Another common foresight in relation to future activities is that Organization A in Turkey and Organization D in Norway clearly claimed that they would take serious actions in relation to competence improvement in the future once they will be more active on social media.

A model of social media communication competence (see *Figure 2.*) that contains list of *actions* and *competence outcomes* is drawn while taking "Model of computer – mediated communication competence" by Spitzberg, 2006 (*Figure 1 - see p.16*) into consideration.

It is possible to claim that hotels in Turkey where actions on social media communication competence is taken (Organization B and C), provide via *social media conferences* and *trainings*, or *regional meetings* for brainstorming; whereas, the only hotel which is active in taking actions on this issue in Norway (Organization A) attempts to provide actions through social media projects such as 'Culture Club' where it is believed that this kind of projects help employees to practice in using social media more effectively.

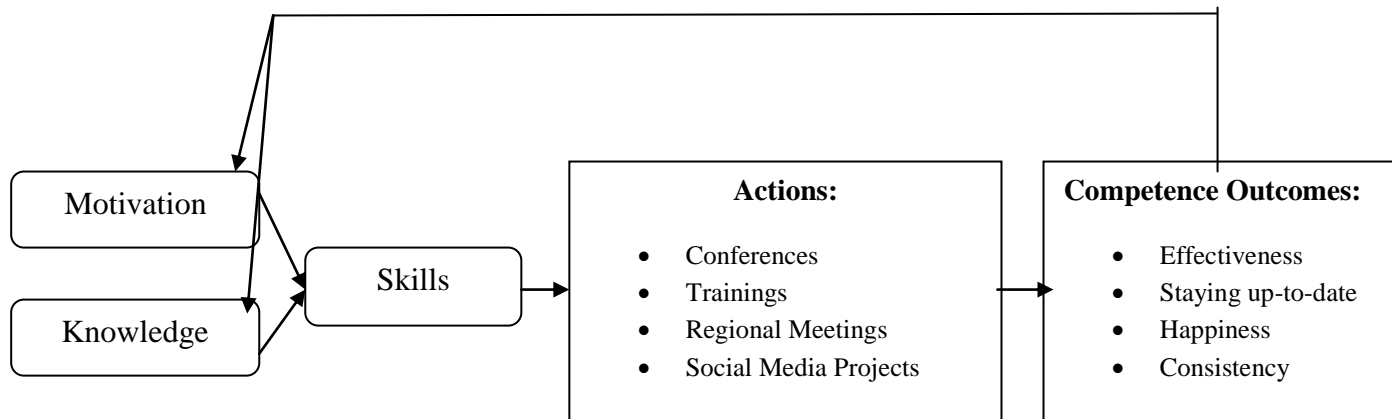


Figure 2: A Model of social media communication competence

As a summary, competence outcomes are listed in the model of social media communication competence. Those outcomes are claimed by the managers of those three active hotels. *Effectiveness* is stated by Organization A in Norway as social media projects are organized to improve effectiveness of social media usage, and Organization B in Turkey specified as creating effective social media users. *Staying up-to-date* is an outcome declared by the hotels in Turkey as it is specified by Organization C in Turkey that “*the world is changing incredibly fast; therefore, we need to renew ourselves as fast as that.*” Moreover, *Happiness* is a key outcome for Organization A in Norway as she believes that employees should be happy about workplace; consequently, they get motivated to share things, and communicate positively. Finally, *Consistency* seems to be important outcome for Organization C in Turkey as he claimed that “*our team consists of experts on how to post online in Turkish and English while keeping the message and meanings same.*”

5.8 Emotional Aspects of Communication through Social Media

All of interviewees both in Turkey and Norway stated that they did not see any negative aspects on communicating through social media at all. Couple of interviewees as in Organization C (Turkey) and Organization D (Norway) strongly indicated that *traditional*

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communication (face-to-face) will always take place in relations; however, social media is the trend nowadays where people can communicate effectively without doubt.

It is interesting that two managers from Norway (Organization A and B) are only worried about '*misunderstandings*' when communicating through devices. Both managers indicated that it will definitely be no problem of misunderstanding feelings as long as there is '*smiley emoticon*' at the end of the messages.

According to informant B in Organization A (Turkey), '*reliability*' is an important aspect while communicating through social media not to be affected negatively as he stated that "... *we strongly believe in sincerity and reality on online communications.*" On the other side, general manager of Organization C (Turkey) stressed the importance of 'the way of reaching audience' through social media in which 'language', 'content' and 'style' etc. of the message is crucial.

As a conclusion, there is every appearance that managers do not think that there are any negative emotional aspects of communicating with social media tools. However, highlighted important key features are to be considered while communicating through social media such as content reliability, 'smiley emoticon' importance, sincerity and reality. Observing that communication through social media does not create negative results is a key fact positively in relation to 'Motivation' part of communication competence by Spitzberg.

6. CONCLUSION

In this part of the paper a conclusion of the research will be presented while relating it to the implications of the findings, as well as limitations of the research that will be followed by recommendations for further studies.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

Considering the literature review, Parra – Lopez (2011, p.641) claimed that it is essential for professionals to identify the types of customer value perceived by travelers using social media for trip planning purposes, because it can provide significant guidelines on how to design the information sources, the structure and the functionality of social media in order to enhance their web traffic, usage and competitiveness. In this research, it therefore shows that organizations due to type of their customers define how they will approach social media at work for communications; for example that manager of Organization B in Norway says “*this is a hotel where you actually do not want to stay!*”

Regarding to Spitzberg (2000, p.380 – 384)’s study on communication competence, it is believed by managers that current employees are already *motivated* to use social media, *knowledge* of social media is adequate, and lastly those hotels that are active on social media compared to others enable employees to attend related trainings or conferences to improve their *skills* for communicating adequately via social media.

6.2 Management Implications

As it is seen that majority of the hotels in Norway and Turkey are not well – structured for social media planning and management; therefore, five out of eight hotels have not taken or planned any actions on improving social media communication competence of employees at work place due to given reason as being inactive on social media tools. On the other hand, There seems to be confusion about external communication among managers in which they most of the time perceived external communication as promotions or marketing purposes. Furthermore, when it is asked what actions are taken for improvement of social media communication competence for employees, majority perceive those actions as trainings, or seminars and related courses. This is the general and common perception among managers.

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Lastly, hotels in Turkey may be seen as more active social media users compared to the ones in Norway even though there seems not much difference. It can also be stated that neither a manager's gender nor country has direct impact on social media communication at work and its' competencies.

6.3 Limitations

This research has some limitations as well. The sample of this research consists of only eight managers totally both in Turkey and Norway. However, the fact that there are many other hotels in Turkey and Norway makes our sample to be perceived too little. Furthermore, there is a limitation which is related to external validity is that it would not be possible to predict how other manager of some other hotels rather than the current sampling would have responded to research questions. As the outcomes of the findings are very small, this therefore makes it hard to generalize findings to the rest of the organizations in Turkey and Norway.

6.4 Further Recommendations

There seems to be lack of literature when it comes to the hotels which are not active in social media usage. Therefore, there has been an issue to explain briefly what 'communication competence' in relation to social media was to some managers. There is another point that I will suggest is that further researches should be more careful on demographic features of the cities that will take part in the researches. It will be more reliable if the cities are for example populated similarly because then it may have an impact on the need for social media usage to in order to reach larger audience.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1 Interview Form (Turkey)

1. Sosyal medyayı nasıl tanımlarsınız?
2. Sosyal medya sizin için ne ifade ediyor?
 - Kişisel olarak hangi sosyal medya çeşitlerini kullanıyorsunuz? (Is dışında / is için)
 - Hangisi favoriniz? Neden?
 - Kullanım amacınız nedir?
 - Çeşitli sosyal medya araçlarını nasıl sınıflandırırsınız?
3. Sosyal medya kullanımı için motive olmuş durumda mısınız?(neden? / Neden değil?)
4. Sizce sosyal medya'nın turizm endüstrisi için önemi nedir?
(neden? / Ne zaman? / nasıl? / örnek verebileceğiniz özel bir durum?)
5. Bir yönetici olarak sosyal medyayı nasıl kullanıyorsunuz?
(Ne / Nasıl / ne zaman)
6. Sizin için sosyal medya yönetiminin anahtar yönleri nelerdir?
 - Nasıl yönetilmesi gerektiğini düşünüyorsunuz?
 - Örnek vermek gerekirse? (Geçmişte yaşanmış bir örnek)
7. İşyerinizde “iç iletişimi” nasıl yönetiyorsunuz?
8. “İç İletişimi” yönetirken sosyal medya'dan herhangi bir yardım alıyor musunuz?
(Nasıl/Ne Çeşit yardımlar)
9. Sizce sosyal medya “iç iletişim” için ne derece önemlidir?

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(neden/neden değil)

10. İşyerinizde “dış iletişimi” nasıl yönetiyorsunuz?

11. “Dış İletişimi” yönetirken sosyal medya’dan herhangi bir yardım alıyor musunuz?

(Nasıl/Ne Çeşit yardımlar)

12. Sizce sosyal medya “dış iletişim” için ne derece önemlidir?

(neden/neden değil)

13. Su ana kadar henüz veya yakın gelecekte çalışanlarınızın iletişim yetkinliğini (yetenek / bilgi / isteklendirme) özellikle sosyal medya anlamında geliştirmek için bir aksiyon planınız / uygulamanız var mı? Eğer var ise, ne çeşit uygulamalar? Yok, ise neden değil?

14. Birebir şekilde klasik tarzda iletişim yerine, sosyal medya aracılığı ile günümüzde insanlarla iletişime geçmenin sizce Türkiye’de olumsuz etkileri var mıdır?

8.2 Interview Form (Norway)

1. How would you describe Social Media?

2. What is social media for you?

- What kind of Social Media do you personally use? (Outside of Work / At work)

- Which one is your favorite Social Media? Why?

- What is the purpose of your usage?

- How would you range different Social Media types?

3. Are you motivated to use Social Media? Why / Why not?

4. How important do you think Social Media is for Tourism Industry?

(Why? / When? / Any special situation?)

5. How do you use Social Media as manager?

(How / What / Why / When)

6. What are the key aspects of Social Media management for you?

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- How do you think it should be managed?
 - Any examples?
7. How do you manage ‘Internal Communication’ at work?
 8. Do you get any benefits from Social Media to manage ‘Internal Communication’?
(How / What kind of benefits)
 9. How important do you think Social Media is for ‘Internal Communication’?
(Why / Why not)
 10. How do you manage ‘External Communication’ at work?
 11. Do you get any benefits from Social Media to manage ‘External Communication’?
(How / What kind of benefits)
 12. How important do you think Social Media is for ‘External Communication’?
(Why / Why not)
 13. Have you taken any actions or are you planning on taking any actions at work in the near future to improve employees’ communication competence (skills/knowledge/motivation) especially related to social media, and if so; what actions have they taken or are planning to take? If not, why not? Why don’t you feel in need of those actions?”
 14. Do you think that communication through social media instead of traditional way (personal / direct touch) causes negative aspects in Norway?

8.3 Information for Interviewees (Turkish)

Hiç şüphe yoktur ki iletişim gerek şirket içi dâhili gerek ise şirket dışı harici olarak firmaların başarısı için titizlik ile yönetilmesi gereken bir etkidir. Her geçen gün sosyal meydanın yaşamlarımıza olan etkisi artmakta ve gerek kişisel/özel gerekse kurumsal amaçlı kullanımları artarak daha da yaygın hale gelmektedir. Bu durumda da “*sosyal medya iletişim yetkinliği ve önemi*” incelenmesi gereken bir alt başlık haline gelmektedir. Tezim de bu

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sebeple çok özel konuyu araştırırken, öneminin hem Türkiye (İzmir) hem de Norveç (Stavanger) otel müdürleri tarafından nasıl algılandığı ve uygulandığını açıklığa kavuşturmaktadır.

Tezimin nitelleyici (Qualitative) bir çalışma olup, birebir röportajlar ile birinci elden bilgi edinmek istiyorum. Bu sebeple sizler ile iletişime geçmek istedim çünkü otelcilik pazarından lider bir markanın müdürü olarak sizlerden alacağım bilgiler ışığında ve Norveç otelleri ile yapacağım görüşmeler sonucunda tez çalışmamı tamamlayacağım. Görüşmelerimiz tamamen gizli ve anonim olacaktır. Kesinlikli firma isimleri ve bilgileri çalışma içerisinde sunulmayacak olup, röportajımız ses kayıt cihazı aracılığı ile kaydedilecektir.

Katkıda bulunmayı kabul ettiğiniz için şimdiden teşekkür ederim.

8.4 Information for Interviewees (English)

There is no doubt that communication is a key aspect both internally and externally for firms to succeed. Each passing day social media has been placing bigger spaces into our lives and been more crucial for individuals as well as firms. There the term of “*Social media communication competence and importance*” becomes more of an issue. My thesis aims at investigating how the importance of ‘social media communication competence’ is perceived and implemented by hotel managers in Turkey (Izmir) and Norway (Stavanger).

For this reason, I would be very glad of having your valuable thoughts about such specific issue and as I mentioned it before that the interview will be completely confidential and anonymous. Company names and information will definitely not present within the study and the interview will be recorded via audio recorder. Once again, I would like to show my appreciation to you for just before having this interview.