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Impact of social media on the sales of a Peruvian hotel corporations

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Abstract

The research aimed to analyze the impact of social media management on the sales of a Peruvian hotel corporations. The study included interviews with top management, including managers from the sales department and marketing team, using a qualitative and basic approach with a phenomenological design. The interviews were analyzed based on two categories: marketing strategies in social media, as defined by Kiráľová & Pavlíček (2015), and the outcomes of using social media, according to Heller & Parasnis (2011); and Soteres (2011). The interviewees perceived a positive impact of the use of social media on the sales of the hotel chain. This effect can be primarily attributed to its role in achieving brand awareness nationally and globally. Similarly, social media disseminates information related to the hotel chain, providing the target audience a clearer understanding of the company's offerings, including accommodation options and pricing details. Furthermore, social media facilitates seamless and direct communication with the target audience. In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights that could easily be applied by hotel chains.

Keywords: Social media; marketing in social media; hotel chain; sales; hospitality.

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Impacto de las redes sociales en las ventas de una corporación hotelera peruana

Resumen

La investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de la gestión de redes sociales en las ventas de una corporación hotelera peruana. El estudio incluyó entrevistas a la alta dirección, incluidos directivos del departamento comercial y del equipo de marketing, utilizando un enfoque cualitativo y básico con un diseño fenomenológico. Las entrevistas fueron analizadas en base a dos categorías: Estrategias de marketing en redes sociales, según lo definido por Kiráľová y Pavlíček (2015), y los resultados del uso de las redes sociales, según Heller y Parasnis (2011); y Soteres (2011). Los entrevistados percibieron un impacto positivo del uso de las redes sociales en las ventas de la cadena hotelera. Este efecto se puede atribuir principalmente a su papel en el logro del conocimiento de la marca a nivel nacional y mundial. De manera similar, las redes sociales difunden información relacionada con la cadena hotelera, brindando al público objetivo una comprensión más clara de las ofertas de la empresa, incluidas las opciones de alojamiento y los detalles de precios. Además, las redes sociales facilitan una comunicación directa y fluida con el público objetivo. En conclusión, este estudio aporta conocimientos valiosos que las cadenas hoteleras podrían aplicar fácilmente.

Palabras clave: Redes sociales; marketing en redes sociales; cadena hotelera; ventas; hotelería.

Introduction

The trend of advertising on social media is growing, as it has become the preferred communication method for users due to the existing interaction between customers and companies. Accordingly, companies should change their advertising approach in this direction (Lucana, 2022). In the context of the hotel industry, the use of social media helps attract new customers through various publicity campaigns that can be developed within the platform. A recent trend highlights investment in all aspects related to social media, as indicated by an article published by Marketing Directo (2022), which is based on data from Emplifi's 2021 research.

This article reveals an 18% increase in publicity investment in social media between the first and second quarters of 2021 (Marketing Directo, 2022). The increased use of social media has demonstrated a positive impact on consumer behaviour (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This positive influence can be mainly attributed to the fact that most users actively engage on social media for more than 20% of their time (Fan & Gordon, 2014).

Currently, Instagram is the most widely used social network for creating publicity (Haudi et al., 2022); this is followed by Facebook and WhatsApp. Furthermore, Tik Tok has emerged as an increasingly used social media platform for creating publicity (Christanti, 2023). The current estimation places the number of active social media users at over 2.3 billion (Jones, 2018).

The size of this audience needs to be exploited, and the primary means to achieve this is through companies developing their social media presence. This step has become an essential element in the organizational strategy of any company (Chalmers & Shotton, 2015; Siti-Nabiha, Nordin & Poh, 2021). Similarly, social media is seen as a source of natural marketing and a promotional tool (Reid & Bojanic, 2009; Jones, 2018). By sharing images and videos on social media platforms, the service can be made more tangible. This helps sales because 'nothing attracts a potential traveler more than a visual

immersion into the property they're about to visit' (EHotelier, 2021, párr. 19).

Social media usage has grown in popularity, as travelers now use it to share their experiences with others. Customers and companies generate diverse data on social media, leading to the growth of digital texts in the service industry (Lee, 2022). Social media "has become a widely used tool in daily life" (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 20).

Companies have adapted to these changes in consumer behavior by making social media an essential part of their marketing plans (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Facebook pages have more than 50 million registered businesses (Lister, 2017). Therefore, large chains in the hotel industry cannot overlook the impact of social media on their business (Jones, 2018). Comparing the most used social media platform, Facebook demonstrates a greater reach in interactive entrainment publications than Instagram. Instagram boats a greater reach in interactive informative and entrainment content. The use of mixed publications increases the number of responses across both networks (Kusumasondjaja, 2018).

Currently, the use of social media has been transformed into the most appropriate way to generate an impact within companies (Marin & Nila, 2021). Social media has become an essential element in the lives of people worldwide. Projections indicate that by 2023, approximately 3.43 billion users will be active on social media (Statista, 2020). The number of individuals using social media has increased over the years, enabling them to share their experiences and express their opinions on diverse topics (Solano, 2020).

According to Arora et al. (2021), the channel has begun to draw in an increasing number of middle-aged and older individuals, but millennials and Gen Z remain the dominant demographic. Currently, users spend several hours on social media, and companies consider this behavior as an opportunity to reach out to more people, familiarize with them and engage with more consumers (Pardo, 2022). Observations have revealed that hotels have

begun using social media as a promotional channel, which enhances profitability. Social media requires minimal investment and can help generate substantial income (Mellinas, Martínez & Bernal, 2016). The advent of digital advertising on social media has facilitated the creation of trends in the hotel sector. It helps recognize the important role of new tools resulting from the use of digital advertising (TotalMedios, 2022).

In addition to taking advantage of trends to create content, companies should incorporate interactive elements that help the target audience maintain interest in the content published on social media and the company. Some examples include interviews, video games, competitions, giveaways, Q&A dynamics, among other innovative approaches (Arora et al., 2021). Brands' interactive publications help reach more audiences than informative content (Kusumasondjaja, 2018).

Moreover, the inclusion of interactivity in publications naturally piques the audience's interest, aligning with one of the defining attributes of social media platforms (Steinhoff et al., 2022). Similarly, meticulous efforts should be directed toward enhancing the quality of content shared on social media, encompassing photography, location, lighting and sound to show the expected idea and concept (Arora et al., 2021).

Several authors have addressed the topic under study at national and international levels. At the national level, Majó, Moya & Vall-llosera (2018) analyzed the impact of social media on hotels in Peru, Ecuador and Colombia and its effect on their income. Apolinario (2021), analyzed the marketing plan on digital platforms focused on attracting guests to a hotel in Chiclayo. The results revealed that the inclusion of a community manager is beneficial for the expansion of the company in the virtual market, thereby increasing the company's income.

Furthermore, Ramos (2020) examined the strategies used in the development of digital marketing in a hotel in Miraflores. The author concluded that the knowledge of the target audience is extremely important to

determine the strategies to be implemented. In an international context, Sevilla & Siguayro (2021) conducted audits in small hotels in Mexico, Argentina and Colombia. The results revealed that the use of social media and digital marketing strategies positively impact hotel operations.

Likewise, Cheraghalizadeh & Dědková (2022) evaluated the relation between service quality and social media marketing to retain hotel guests; discovered that both variables are relevant to improving customer satisfaction. They further discovered that customer satisfaction, brand awareness and social media marketing play an important role in retaining customers.

Similarly, Mucunska & Nakovski (2022) studied the basic characteristics of digital marketing and its channels, specifically focusing on the hotel sector. They concluded that the effective implementation of marketing in hotel social media can lead to extraordinary results in creating direct growth opportunities.

This research answers the following question: What is the impact of social media management on the increase in sales of a Peruvian hotel chain? Addressing this research question is crucial for the hospitality sector. Currently, few hotels in Peru are taking advantage of the maximum reach that could be achieved through the use of social media to attract customers, thereby increasing the overall sales of the hotels. Other hotels could benefit from replicating the information gathered, as this could help them manage their social media to boost sales.

1. Theoretical foundation

1.1. Marketing in social media

Social media marketing includes the promotional strategies implemented through these channels for increasing the target audience and the number of guests who decide to stay or consume at the hotel. The main difference between traditional marketing and social media marketing is that the latter has more advantages, being more precise with lower costs and timely market information (Zi, 2021).

Another advantage of using social media marketing is that it helps customer retention (Cheraghalizadeh & Dědková, 2020); and the viralization of content that occurs on these platforms presents lower costs for companies (Scarpinelli, 2011). "Digital marketing and marketing in social media allow companies to achieve their marketing goals at a relatively low cost" (Ajina, 2019, p. 1513), improving the profitability of the company.

Gazca, Mejía & Herrera (2022), stated that to apply digital marketing, it is fundamental to use software that helps make the follow-up of the services and products offered more efficient, with the aim of automating processes. Google Analytics or Instagram statistics are examples of software that help achieve this, since they provide a clearer situation of the results obtained.

Furthermore, social media marketing makes it easier for companies to communicate with their customers, market their products, increase their visibility in the market, thereby gaining the loyalty of a greater number of customers; additionally, social media enables users to talk about their experiences, allowing services to be shared and recommended. This implies that more people will want to use the products and experience and enjoy them (Acerenza, 2004; Chen, 2022). This software provides companies with the necessary metrics to evaluate their performance, which "help to link specific campaigns to future sales, and therefore to the success of the campaign" (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 17).

Advertising on social media, especially Instagram, is influenced by consumer perceptions in several aspects, including content use, entrainment and credibility (Gaber, Wright & Kooli, 2019). One of the strategies used in social media is 'growing grass', which increases the frequency of consumption of the population (Xu, Zeng & Eric, 2020). In addition, the use of content based on entrainment and interaction between the customer and the company helps create

more interest among customers, especially when publications focus on customer participation (Steinhoff et al., 2022; Acosta, 2023).

While companies actively engage in social media marketing, they also indirectly benefit from it through satisfied clients who willingly share their experiences, generating value for the company (Barboza et al., 2022; Acosta, 2023). This happens when customers share any type of post about their experience and someone else can share it with their friends, family and/or followers. Thus, more people can learn about a particular company's offerings (Chen, 2022).

Subjectivity online reviews can increase the purchase intention of new consumers (Liu, Ozanne & Mattila, 2018); through customer reviews, managers can determine the strengths and weaknesses of their hotels (He et al. 2017). Marketing on social networks has become a good advertising, promotion, loyalty and profitability strategy, since it has greater reach for a lower cost than traditional marketing.

1.2. Social media

Social media is a virtual service that allows people to create a profile on a specific platform and interact with other profiles that share the same preferences and/or needs (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Similarly, social media becomes universal when countries invest in communication technology infrastructure providing Internet access to all (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019; Sheth, 2020). Social media allows us to remain updated with the lives of our family and friends, as it provides a link to maintain such relationships; providing a sensation of closeness regardless of existing physical barriers.

A study on social media conducted by the Observatorio Nacional de las Telecomunicaciones y de la SI (ONTSI, 2011), indicated that social media is a service provided through the Internet, where users must create a profile, either public or private, using personal information, to interact with other users. In terms of companies, social media is used to create awareness about the different services they provide (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Currently, social media marketing strategies are important for businesses. Kiráľová & Pavlíček (2015), stated that "more and more destinations are shifting their traditional communication strategy based on radio, television, print and other channels to internet and social media" (p. 360). If used wisely, marketing strategies help increase the awareness of a hotel, achieve publicity at a global level; strengthen and guarantee a better image of the hotel, increase the number of visits to its social media, among other benefits (Kiráľová & Pavlíček, 2015). In addition, they create a greater flow of interaction between users, which can be between the hotel and its customers (Lutai, 2022) or between customers who leave comments about their experience.

At present, many hotels belong to hotel chains that use social media marketing strategies to turn these platforms into a sales channel (Cascales, Fuentes & De Esteban, 2017). This is because social media is essential for promoting a company's image and reaching a wider public, thus encouraging the purchase of the product on offer (Michael & Fusté-Forné, 2022). Arora et al. (2021), stated that good marketing strategies influence results. Often, companies do not invest adequate time or resources in them, leading to failure. Sending notifications to the target audience about events and promotions taking place in the hotels through various social media platforms is fundamental for maximizing views.

Heller & Parasnis (2011), stated that companies can use social media platforms as an opportunity to build closer relationships with customers, resulting in increased sales, reduced costs and improved efficiency levels. Lamberton & Stephen (2016), stated that through social media, customers can easily share information and interact with brands.

Using social media as part of the marketing plan has many benefits for companies, especially today where the generation of young millennials or generation Z emerges who have been born, educated

and socialized since their inception with the internet and social media (Martín et al., 2021). Authors indicate that the most relevant is the increase in sales as a result of implementing social media in the company. If you have a clear strategy, social media is the ideal medium for advertising, since they achieve greater reach at a lower cost.

Soteres (2011), stated that the implementation of social media has benefits, including an enhanced perception of brand identity, a streamlined means of gathering valuable information during market research, the potential for increased sales through hotel promotion on diverse social media platforms, and the prospect of reduced costs associated with advertising and marketing efforts.

1.3. Sales impact

Sales are defined as a personal or impersonal process in which the seller certifies, activates and satisfies the buyer's needs for the mutual and continuous benefit of both parties (Ramos, 2017). Moreover, it is defined as a contract in which the seller is obliged to transfer a good or right to the buyer in exchange for a certain amount of money (Pujol, 1999). Linking sales to social media, Liadeli, Sotgiu & Verlegh (2022) stated that "brand communication is aimed at increasing sales" (p. 321). Therefore, the use of social media positively influences sales (Hewett et al., 2016; Mochon et al., 2017).

The COVID 19 pandemic has forced entrepreneurs and businessmen to reinvent themselves and identify social media as important allies in the market, offer or sell services and products (Durán, Páez & García, 2021). Currently, social media allows companies to find target customers and, when the time comes, to close sales (Perazo, 2020). Hotels use this social media as a communication channel that shows recommendations from guests, which can help build a good online reputation and, ultimately, generate sales as a result (Cascales et al., 2017). According to Steenkamp (2020), these virtual platforms

allow brands to reach consumers in countries they could not reach without a physical store, generating more sales opportunities.

2. Methodology

The study began with an exploratory analysis using a qualitative approach (Bernal, 2010; Hernández, Fernández y Baptista, 2014). The main research technique was an in-depth interview. The open-ended interview guide was used as the research instrument, which was validated with the opinion of three professional experts who participated in the study (two hotel professionals and one digital marketing professional).

Furthermore, 11 professional top managers were selected from a total of more than 40 high-level professionals from each of the 30 branches of said hotel chain, located throughout Peru. The inclusion criteria were as follows: Those with the necessary knowledge of how the hotel manages social media, those with administrative or management positions (managers, sales department, marketing and front office) and those with at least one year in the company. The interviews were carried out based on the theoretical saturation criteria and the comments of Hernández et al. (2014), who stated that a minimum of 10 interviewees is required to conduct a phenomenological qualitative study.

Probabilistic sampling was used to understand the topic in depth based on the detailed information provided by the interviewees' own words and experiences. The interviews were analyzed based on two categories: marketing strategies in social media, according to Kiráľová & Pavlíček (2015), and the outcomes of using social media, according to Heller & Parasnis (2011); and Soteres (2011).

The data were collected by conducting the relevant interviews with the identified sample. Thereafter, the data from these interviews were transcribed and processed. The data were coded to identify the interviewees and the most relevant comments. Finally, the

interviewees' responses were categorized to identify patterns for later analysis of the results.

3. Results and discussion

From those surveyed, 27% were supervisors, 55% were hotel directors, 9% were regional directors and 9% were managers (see Table 1). Regarding the location of the hotel where they worked, 18% worked in a specific hotel in Lima, 45% were located in different provinces (Piura, Tacna, Lambayeque, Cuzco and Arequipa) and 36% worked in corporate positions of the whole chain. Furthermore, 18% knew the type of marketing used, and 82% knew more about the sales they generated in a specific hotel or in the hotel chain in general. Of the 11 people interviewed, 45% were male and 55% were female.

Table 1
Interviewees classified by gender, position, area and location

Gender	Position	Area	Location
Feminine	Supervisor	Reception	Lima
Feminine	Supervisor	Bookings	Lima
Male	Manager	San Isidro	Lima
Feminine	Supervisor	Marketing	Lima
Male	Manager	Management	Piura
Male	Regional Manager	Management	Tacna
Feminine	Manager	Management	Lambayeque
Male	Manager	Management	Arequipa
Feminine	Senior Analyst	Revenue Management	Lima
Male	Manager	Management	Cuzco
Feminine	Manager	Management	Lima

Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

Table 2, shows the main comments made by the people surveyed regarding the strategies used through social media.

Table 2
Main comments regarding strategies on social media

Category	Subcategory	Comments	Interviewee
Strategies on social media	Brand awareness	"It was possible to reach more people, more potential clients all over Peru"	Manager in Lambayeque
	Global Publicity	"Social media has an impact worldwide, therefore, everything we publish here (...) will be reflected"	Supervisor in Lima (Miraflores)
	Company Image	"Through the communication we post on social media, we are showing a little bit about our brand"	Manager in Lima (Miraflores)
	Communication with the specific market	"We achieved a closer link with our clients and we get to know their needs"	Senior Analyst in Lima
	Number of Guests	"It has increased and we work with BI where all this is recorded"	Manager in Lima (San Isidro)

Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

Furthermore, 100% of the respondents stressed that social networks have contributed to brand awareness, indicating that "it has been possible to reach many more people, many more potential customers all over Peru" (Lambayeque Manager, personal communication, May 2, 2023). Cheraghalizadeh & Dědková (2022), indicated that social network marketing helps with customer retention.

According to the interviewees, Instagram (5) is the most used social network in the hotel chain, followed by Facebook (4), this social network contributes to the increase in followers (Hsu, 2012); and finally Tik Tok (3). According to Ojo (2022), "Facebook (...) and Instagram have become the favorites of the Peruvian population due to the more frequent use that they make of them" (párr. 2).

In addition, one respondent mentioned the usefulness of working with influencers in the hotel, which also aligns with the findings of Kapoor et al. (2022). The authors emphasized that social media influencers should convey a message that publicizes the good of the hotel's sustainability measures to reach and persuade travelers. Influencers also help the company to better understand its target audience's behavior and tastes Fan & Gordon, 2014); when working with them, the image of the brand must be maintained, since the comments they provide could be negative and harm the hotel. Likewise, Moreira et al. (2021) mentioned that companies decide to use digital strategies together with influencers to build and enhance the brand and expand the service, increasing awareness and sales.

The respondents confirmed that the use of social media makes the brand more popular among foreigners, as brand awareness plays an important role in customer satisfaction (Cheraghalizadeh & Dědková, 2022). Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that social media is helpful in providing information about the company's services and benefits, obtaining comments from guests and the hotel's reputation, as well as the exchange of information about prices and promotions, in addition to information about the hotel chain.

Mazaraki et al. (2022), stated that most of the information about hotel prices is shared through apps, social media and websites. Hsu (2012), stated that social media platforms such as Facebook can increase the number of followers (users). "Facebook alone, has a penetration rate in the global market of more than 12% of the online population" (Fan & Gordon, 2014, p. 3). However, to achieve this, hotels need to design international strategies through customers, which will provide positive results if the hotel is active within social media and has constant contact with its followers.

All the interviewees agreed that social media has helped the public to have a clearer image of the company. The Regional Manager of the Tacna Hotel confirmed this by saying "using social media helps the image a lot" (personal communication, May 2, 2023). Most of the interviewees confirmed that social media has helped the chain to become more popular and understand more about the culture of service provided by the chain's hotels. The majority of the interviewees affirmed that social media has played a pivotal role in aiding the public to distinguish between the three distinct brand types: Standard, three-star; select, four-star; and premium, five-star. Additionally, it has facilitated the identification of the diverse locations of the hotels throughout the country.

He et al. (2022), stated that the customer's perception of the authenticity and reliability of the brand is related to psychological mechanisms, where appeals to emotions are related to the level of loyalty and reliability that customers have towards their brand. Yaşarsoy, Çalişkan & Pamukçu (2022), stated that a good virtual reputation cannot be achieved without a good website, good contact with customers and active participation in social media.

Furthermore, 100% of respondents stated that using social media has helped them to communicate more easily with their target audience. In particular, it has helped them to respond quickly to problems (8 interviewees), be more accessible to guests (4 interviewees), to improve customer service (3 interviewees), be an active hotel on social media, maintain

frequent contact with their followers (Hsu, 2012); and target certain promotions to specific segments. This was confirmed by the senior analyst in Lima, who stated that "she has achieved a closer relationship with her customer and also got to know his needs" (personal communication, May 3, 2023).

Similarly, the use of emails and traditional channels does not capture as much of the target audience's attention, as they are more active on websites and social media, according to Díaz & Rivas (2019). Likewise, Lutai (2022) stated that social media platforms facilitate communication and create a greater flow of interaction among hotel users.

Most of the interviewees agreed that the use of social media has directly increased the number of guests they receive. This was confirmed by the manager in Lima (San Isidro) who stated that "it has increased, and we work with BI [Business Intelligence] where all this is recorded" (personal communication, April 26, 2023). This was also confirmed by Sevilla & Siguayro (2021), showing that social media and digital marketing strategies positively affect hotel operations.

Regarding monitoring changes, those interviewed confirmed that they look at the channel where the booking was made or at the publicity or campaign that has been launched. Arévalo, Cordón-Garcia & Maltrás (2016) confirmed this by stating that, currently, several social media outlets allow all kinds of information to be shared and enable connections with other users. The use of these platforms generates activity and interaction statistics derived from their user base. Moreover, they offer reference metrics that allow for the observation of popularity indexes, which can be tailored to align with the specific requirements of the company.

All respondents stated that the hotel's guest surveys indicate that guests identified the hotel through social media (see Table 3). Oliveira & Fernandes (2022); and Michael & Fusté-Forné (2022), confirmed this information, mentioning that social media is essential to promote the company's image and reach a wider audience, in addition to promoting the purchase of the service offered. Inversini & Masiero (2014), documented that the role of social media in sales positively relates with the effective use of marketing and the correct use of social media resources.

Table 3
Main comments regarding the use of social media

Category	Subcategory	Comments	Interviewee
Results of the use of social media	Activity on social media	"This has helped us get on average between 3,000 to 4,000 new followers every month. Our participation is active"	Marketing Supervisor in Lima
	Digital Content	"Our biggest value added which we mention all the time, is that we are the biggest Peruvian chain with the greatest positioning at the national level"	Senior Analyst in Lima
	Sales variation	"Clearly, there has been a sales increase since now the offer is in social media and web"	Manager in Lima (San Isidro)
	Contact with the audience	"We mainly use Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn"	Marketing Supervisor in Lima
	Engaging the target audience	"We know that we receive much more client requests of bookings made through social media"	Corporate Supervisor in Lima
	Publicity and Marketing Costs	"Costs have been significantly reduced regarding publicity and marketing, for our demands and our audience"	Manager in Cuzco

Source: Own elaboration, 2023.

Regarding the social media activities of the Peruvian hotel chain, most of the interviewees rated it as good, optimal and/ or active, as confirmed by the manager in Arequipa: "The use of social media within the hotel chain is optimal; it is definitely the right one, the one we are trying to transmit" (personal communication, May 3, 2023). Furthermore, 2 interviewees confirmed that it helped improve the perception of customers, and 1 interviewee stated that it helped increase the number of followers. All of this can be confirmed by Padilla-Piernas, Parra-Meroño & Beltrán-Bueno (2022), who stated that currently, social media users are more interested in websites and social channels that are safe and easy to use, thereby improving their experience.

Regarding the positioning strategies for their digital content, most of the interviewees confirmed that these can vary depending on each hotel, location, season, customer and platform used. The participants stated that the strategies consisted of using promotions or focusing on a specific market, either 'B to C', corporate or leisure. One of the interviewees emphasized the importance of mentioning the added value of each hotel in the strategies. The development of digital marketing positively impacts the performance of five-star hotels in Jordan (Khalayleh & Al-Hawary, 2022).

Finally, most of the respondents agreed that the use of social media as a method of promotion has helped reduce the cost of promotion and marketing. This is confirmed by the manager in Cuzco: "Costs have been significantly reduced in terms of promotion and marketing, for our needs and our audience" (personal communication, May 4, 2023). Castelló (2013), confirmed that there is a need to capitalise on costs, which can be achieved with integrated communication management. Similarly, Scarpienlli (2011) stated that one of the advantages of promoting a company on social media is that the content can go viral with low promotional costs, including the option of paying to promote.

With regard to the impact of managing social media to increase sales in a Peruvian hotel chain, all respondents stated that social media has positively impacted the hotel chain's sales, which are increasing overall. This was confirmed by the manager in Lima: "Clearly, there has been an increase in sales since now that the offer is on social media and the web" (personal communication, April 26, 2023). Furthermore, Liadeli et al. (2022) affirm that: "Brand communication in social media is aimed at increasing sales" (p. 320). Therefore, sales are positively influenced by the use of social media (Hewett et al. 2016; Mochon et al., 2017).

According to the receptionist in Lima, "there has been a significant increase that has exceeded our expectations" (personal communication, April 18, 2023). Therefore, companies can use social media to build closer relationships with customers (Heller & Parasnis, 2011), and for active participation (Yaşarsoy et al., 2022), thereby increasing sales, reducing costs and improving efficiency levels. Mucunska & Nakovski (2022), stated that the effective implementation of social media marketing in a hotel can lead to extraordinary results in the creation of direct opportunities for growth.

Conclusions

The impact of social media on increasing sales within the evaluated Peruvian hotel chain is positive; based on the investigation conducted we can reach the conclusion that since they started using social media their sales have increased both directly and indirectly. Social media positively influences the increase in sales; this is mainly because they help raise brand awareness both nationally and globally. In addition, they support when providing information related to the hotel chain; they help the public to have a clearer image about the company and learn more about its different benefits, locations, rates, among other information about the services. Additionally, social media helps in the process of maintaining simpler and more direct communication with the target audience.

Social media have helped improve customer perception and reduce costs related to advertising and marketing, it is important to mention the added value of each hotel as part of the positioning strategies. This research provides valuable knowledge for the various hotel chains within Peru and worldwide; since digital marketing strategies can be replicated globally.

Among the limitations of the study, we found: the distance between the various hotels belonging to the hotel chain, since it has 30 hotels located throughout Peru; which also means that each one has a unique target audience, which is also related to the brand to which it belongs (Standard, Select, Premium).

As a recommendation, research can be carried out based on analyzing more depth the indicators used in this research and investigating consumers; with updated information, managers will be able to make better decisions related to advertising to generate greater income for the company.

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