

Heads in Beds: A Best Practices Examination of Advertising  
Platforms for Multi-National Hotel Chains

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Erika Segal

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## ABSTRACT

### HEADS IN BEDS: A BEST PRACTICES EXAMINATION OF ADVERTISING PLATFORMS FOR MULTI-NATIONAL HOTEL CHAINS

ERIKA SEGAL

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Multi-national hotel chains have thousands of hotels and resorts all over the world. Despite their many differences, one thing they all have in common is the need to advertise. The purpose of this study was to research the advertising techniques of each chain in order to determine the best practices for this business sector. The researcher found that many of the chains were inconsistent with their advertising platforms, rendering their efforts ineffective for acquiring and maintaining customers. Key recommendations were that a company only keeps advertising platforms if they are able to maintain and manage them well, to ensure that television advertising be a focus for the chain as a whole, and that print advertisements target as diverse of an audience as possible.

Keywords: hotel advertising, multi-national chains, social media platforms, print ads

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Background of Study

Advertising is a tool that can be utilized to promote and generate revenue for businesses. Some of the most widely used methods are television and print ads, email blasts, word of mouth, and more commonly, social media. In the hotel industry, advertising can allow a company to target a much larger audience and reach many more customers. Advertising benefits the business by bringing in more customers, and clients can benefit by taking advantage of advertised specials or promotions. The economy profits from the hotel industry's success too, which brought in \$41 million in the United States alone in 2013 (American Hotel & Lodging Association, 2014). Although its methods can vary greatly between different properties and brands, advertising is a profitable and necessary expense for hotels chains.

Each method of advertising is very different, but the goal for almost every hotel is the same: to get more "heads in beds." In regards to their revenue, hotels are first and foremost concerned with getting customers to purchase overnight stays. The majority of a hotel's revenue comes from overnight guests, so it only makes sense that a hotel will want to target most of their advertising towards that clientele.

As another level of analysis hotels want to get the highest financial return from each guest as possible, which can depend on how the customer learned about the property and ultimately booked the stay. When a hotel obtains the customer via their own advertisement and makes a direct-to-consumer reservation they incur a lower overhead

cost by avoiding third party expenses. As the reservation becomes further removed from the hotel itself it often means less overall income for the property. Examples of this are travel agents and other third party booking services. Although they are becoming less popular, travel agents are still responsible for booking a great deal of rooms for travelers. Despite selling another hotel room, the hotel will often have to give the travel agent a commission for bringing the customer to the property, which takes away from their overall revenue and the usefulness of their advertising campaign. Hotels are aware of this revenue loss and in an attempt to lessen it, must balance their forms of advertising with the income that each will ultimately generate for their bottom line. For smaller hotels this can mean only marketing to their local community, while a larger hotel chain might invest in a multi-million dollar television campaign. While the financial cost of advertising varies immensely, it is a critical expense regardless of the hotel's size.

Customers are affected by the advertisements that lead them to a hotel, which is their first impression of the property. Regardless if it is a family vacation to a tropical island or an overnight business trip, a customer's opinion will determine whether they will return to the property and how much the company will benefit from their business. Among many other factors, advertising plays a large role in that process and is therefore a necessary cost for any lodging establishment. The purpose of this study was to determine what advertising tactics are used by multi-national hotel chains and whether those different platforms are being used effectively or not.

## Review of Literature

Research for this review of literature was conducted at Robert E. Kennedy Library on the campus of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. In addition to books and other resources, the following online databases were utilized: Academic Search Elite, ABI/INFORM Complete, and Hospitality and Tourism Complete. This review of literature is organized into the following topic areas: advertising, destination marketing tactics, consumer perceptions of loyalty and social media effectiveness.

Advertising is utilized by businesses of all shapes and sizes to attract customers. Companies can advertise by way of many mediums, which can depend on their budget for marketing, their target customer and several other factors. One of the most common types of advertising is on television. With technological advances in the past decade businesses can not only select which channels their ads will be featured on, but can also only show their ad to customers in specific geographic locations that are close in proximity to their brick and mortar locations. Although television ads can be expensive, with the amount of TV consumers watch the money spent on ads is well worth it.

Although the same can be said for most countries, the United States is especially inundated with television advertisements. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported that in 2009 Americans watched an average of 2.28 hours of television every day. Commercials are generally between 15 and 30 seconds in length, which led to the conclusion that “people are exposed to 550 TV ads weekly or nearly 29,000 annually” (Jin & Lutz, 2013, p. 345). Despite the increase of digital video recorders (DVR) that allow viewers to skip commercials, consumers are still flooded with advertisements.

Many of the heavily watched shows on television are live broadcasts, which force the audience to sit through commercials.

In some cases the commercials actually become just as popular as the program, such as the Super Bowl. The National Football League Championship was the most watched television program in 2012, with 108 million viewers tuning in (Siltanen, 2014, p.1). Prices for advertising spots during the game are reportedly at a price of \$4 million for a 30-second slot. Lucky for these advertisers, 50% of Super Bowl viewers are only interested actually in the commercials, which are talked about for weeks after the game is over. Although a Super Bowl commercial is out of reach for many businesses, larger companies dedicate millions of dollars to the production of these commercials in hopes of boosting their brand awareness to the millions of Americans watching. The same can be said for television ads for hotels, which seek to remind the customer of the brand and to consider it for their future travels.

Just as a business needs to promote their product or service, travel destinations need to promote themselves. Countries, states and even some large cities run their own advertisements encouraging consumers to choose their destination. Visit California (formerly known as the California Travel and Tourism Commission) is a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote California to domestic and international travelers. They develop advertisements like the popular 2011 “Misconceptions” ad, which featured several celebrities and multiple destinations within the state. The ad was broadcast domestically, and additional versions were produced to target specific counties. Advertisements like this contribute to direct travel spending in California, which reached \$109.6 billion in 2013 (Visit California, 2013).

Although the United States as a country does not advertise as prevalently as the State of California, many other countries have produced their own commercials to target American travelers. Visit Australia estimates that there were 501,300 visitors from the United States of America to Australia in 2013, which accounted for an increase of 6.5% from 2012 and \$2.6 billion in total expenditures (Tourism Australia, 2015). This prompted them to develop an ad to specifically target the Americas which is entitled, “There’s Nothing Like Australia.” While this is only one example of destination marketing targeting foreign travelers, it is a common practice among tourism destinations. Very few destinations can attract travelers despite a complete lack of advertising however. France is a perfect example of this, which remains the most visited country in the world (World Tourism Organization, 2013). France is an exception to the rule that businesses and destinations alike need to advertise to potential customers.

Regardless of the medium of the advertisement, it is crucial that they convey a positive message to the customer. Advertisers struggle to produce messages that will resonate with the audience and encourage them to think of their brand for their next purchase. Hsu, Yang and Su (2007) conducted a survey that attempted to understand whether consumers will react positively or negatively to an ad. By way of surveys they determined the demographics of their sample and concluded that, “for consumers who had relatively more time to watch television, positive attitudes were formed toward the information provided in TV advertising” (Hsu, Yang & Su, 2007, p.165). Their results determined that when viewers spend more time watching television they react more positively to advertisements, in comparison to those who spent less time watching television and responded more negatively to advertisements. Television is also a more

reliable source of advertising than other mediums. In terms of the reliability of a product or service, “the media richness of a TV infomercial as an advertisement medium reduces the risk perceived by consumers” (Kang, Cheon & Shin, 2011, p. 362). When customers are confident in the brand they see advertised they are more likely to be repeat customers and to recommend the brand to others.

Customer loyalty is especially important in brands that relate to the travel and tourism industry, as customers value brands when they are visiting unfamiliar destinations. Returning customers can not only predict future profits, but they are less expensive to maintain than acquiring new visitors (Hochgraefer, Faulk & Vieregge, 2012). If a business does not have to seek out a customer and rather the customer seeks out the brand, then they have what is called brand loyalty. Although the situation still requires a decision on the part of the customer, cognitive loyalty says that no other options will be strongly considered.

A four-stage model explains the processes of brand loyalty based upon the customer’s vulnerabilities and commitments (Oliver, 1999). Each stage of customer loyalty has its own identifying marker and specific vulnerabilities by other competing brands. The first stage, cognitive loyalty, is marked by a customer’s loyalty to information such as price, or amenities. Cognitive loyalty indicates that the customer believes the brand is better than others because of information they have received, from advertising for example. The next stage of loyalty that Oliver describes is affective loyalty, which is marked by the customer liking a product, service or brand. In this stage the customer dislikes other competing brands, and believes them to be of lesser quality or value, among other factors. Oliver’s third stage of loyalty is conative, which says the

customer is loyal to the intention to buy the brand, and is committed to it fully. A customer at this stage of loyalty can even endure periods of dissatisfaction with a brand while still staying loyal to it. The final and most resilient stage of customer loyalty is action (Oliver, 1999). Oliver's research says that customers in this stage will only abandon the brand if they are forced to by a factor outside of their power, such as it being discontinued. Oliver's interpretation of customer loyalty can be translated to almost any industry and makes for a good measure of a business's consumer perception. Businesses can capitalize on these loyalties and ensure that those repeat customers will continue to buy their product again, hopefully without considering others.

A great way for businesses to maintain customer loyalty is by interacting with them, and the growth of social media platforms where companies can communicate directly with customers has made this easier than ever. Websites like Facebook allow the business to develop a unique and customizable page where anyone can interact with the company; however this doesn't always guarantee that the platform will be useful as a promotional platform. Businesses believe that if they start up a social media account like Facebook they are guaranteed to see an increase in internet views and "hits" however a lot of the time this is not the case, as businesses don't put thought into their advertising strategy. Wright, Khanfar, Harrington and Kizer (2010) discuss the topic of effectively using social media to advertise, specifically addressing how a business must find a happy medium between infrequent postings and swamping the customer with too many posts. Rather than posting things aimlessly, a business needs to develop a plan for their social media advertising in order to reap all its available benefits. The advertising game is a two-way street and, "the marketer has to bring value to the conversation in order to take

anything positive away from the experience (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer, 2010, p. 77). To really make social media an effective tool it is essential that advertisers maintain their different platforms to keep customers engaged and interested in the brand.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the advertising campaigns used by multi-national hotel chains to develop a best practices strategy.

### Research Questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. Is it better for hotel chains to use only a few social media platforms or several?
2. Is it sufficient to use online video websites like YouTube for advertising or are other platforms like television ads more effective?
3. Although magazines and newspapers aren't as popular nowadays, should hotel chains still advertise in them?

## Chapter 2

### METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine what advertising tactics are used by multi-national hotel chains and whether those different platforms are being used effectively or not. This chapter includes the following sections: description of context, description of instrument, and description of procedures.

#### Description of Context

Best practices of the advertising campaigns were examined for multi-national hotel chains, and the organizations chosen were the five largest hotel chains in the world. With the increase of leisure and business travel in recent years, the opportunities for hotel brands to gain a piece of the pie has never been greater. Hotel chains compete for the same customers so it is essential that they focus their advertising on gaining and retaining travelers. The average business will allocate about 10% of their budget for advertising, and it is essential that it is spent wisely and via the most effective platforms. Social media and the advancements of products like the iPhone and tablets allow marketers to reach customers constantly, and through several means (Grensing-Pophal, 2014). To successfully attract the customer, these large hotel chains need to not only make sure they communicate the message the customer is looking for, but also that it reaches them via a variety of sources.

### Description of Instrument

The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices matrix developed by the researcher. Information from the Review of Literature was used to organize the instrument and develop ideas for further research. The instrument consists of a list of criteria used to analyze the advertising strategy of each hotel chain in order to discover the best practices of competitive marketing strategies of each chain.

A pilot study was completed using a smaller international hotel chain. After the pilot study was completed, changes were made to the matrix to the effect of adding more specific questions, including two more advertising platforms, and adding a qualitative notes section.

### Description of Procedures

Best practices of advertising strategies of hotel chains were examined for: Intercontinental Hotel Group, Hilton Worldwide, Marriot International, Wyndham Worldwide and Accor. The instrument utilized in this study was a best practices matrix. The research for the study occurred in a two week period in February of 2015. Advertising tactics were analyzed first by way of the hotel's official website, their Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and various travel magazines. The matrix involved several yes or no questions, and in order to further analyze the advertising campaigns notes were also taken. The researcher looked at the home page of each website to see what information was displayed there, and what aspects of the brand were missing or inconsistent. For the social media and photo sharing platforms, the researcher first looked for profiles for the brand as a whole. If the company did not have an account

for the entire brand then they looked for an account within the brand which had many and frequent postings, a considerable amount of followers and one that was updated recently. For print advertising the researcher looked at advertising spreads online that were originally posted in magazine. YouTube was used to find video advertisements for the brands, and similar to the social media platform, if a main brand video couldn't be located then the researcher looked for videos for an individual property or smaller brand within the chain.

## Chapter 3

### PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the best practices of advertising campaigns used by multi-national hotel chains. A best practices approach was utilized to examine the following hotel chains: Intercontinental Hotel Group, Hilton Worldwide, Marriot International, Wyndham Worldwide and Accor. This chapter includes the following sections: overview of selected hotel chains, social media advertising, photo sharing platforms, print advertisements and commercials.

#### Overview of Selected Hotels

There are countless hotel chains in business today, but far fewer of the chains have gained international stature. The five largest hotel chains in the world operate in almost every country, providing lodging for customers at over 23,000 hotels all over the globe. The Intercontinental Hotel Group has roots going back to 1777 and currently operates 4,600 hotel properties in 100 countries. The company has ten brands, including Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants which it acquired in late 2014. Hilton Worldwide was founded in 1919 and has 4,112 hotels in 91 countries. Hilton Worldwide encompasses ten brands including the Hilton Grand Vacations timeshare brand. Marriot International was founded in 1927 and operates 4,078 hotels in 80 countries, as well as two theme parks. Marriot is the umbrella organization for 18 international hotel chains, including the recently purchased Protea Hotel chain. Wyndham Worldwide was founded recently in 2006, and operates 7,400 hotels in 66 countries. The chain includes 14 hotel brands,

ranging from the economical Super 8 to the lavish Wyndham Grand Collection. The brand also manages the popular Planet Hollywood chain of restaurants. Accor was founded in 1967 in Paris and operates 3,700 hotels in 92 countries. The brand has 16 hotel chains beneath it, the majority of which are international.

### Social Media Marketing

All of the chains that the researcher examined utilized social media platforms as an instrument for advertising. The first of which that a customer might go to is the brand's official webpage, but customers that are more curious in the brand will likely also access the official Facebook page for a hotel chain. While a webpage can provide well-developed verbiage and images, a Facebook page allows for customers to post their own opinions of a chain and share their experiences with other potential customers.

The Intercontinental Hotel Group has a main webpage that encompasses all its brands, and reservations can be filtered by a specific chain or just a location. The design is minimal, although it does provide all the necessary information a guest would be interested in. The page has more information about featured destinations as you scroll down further, but it is not easy to navigate. The Hilton Worldwide webpage also allows guests to easily make reservations and see each hotel chain in the group. Their main page is visually attractive and showcases several of the brand's services including mobile check-in and room selection, \$100 weekend night specials and information about their loyalty program. The page slides between pictures of destinations all over the world as well as guests relaxing in different places of a hotel. The Marriot International webpage is very well arranged, conveniently displaying the reservation screen while also

displaying pictures of several of their properties. The page also has a login box for their loyalty program, and displays weekly specials that are currently being offered.

Wyndham Worldwide's website is very plain and besides the reservation section does not include much else of visual appeal. The page filters through a few pictures of coffee, a family, and someone who appears to be a hotel employee. Accor's website is simple as well, displaying only a few pictures of some of their properties. The reservation link is evident, but the page does not discuss amenities or specials within their brands. Potential guests may also access the Facebook page for a hotel before deciding to book.

The Intercontinental Hotel Group has a Facebook that is updated every week or so, however it includes more information about their finances and economic status than about destinations. Several individual hotels within the chain operate their own Facebook pages, although many of them do not have current postings. Hilton Worldwide's Facebook page is updated often and has posts that range from employee recognition to "Throwback Thursday" pictures of the founder of the company. The page is eye catching and encourages customers to read about all the aspects of the Hilton brand. As with the Intercontinental Hotel Group, many of the individual Hilton brands and properties host their own pages, although several are outdated and lacking in posts. Marriot International has a very well developed Facebook page that includes pictures of their hotels, information about popular destinations and the cuisine that their hotels offer. Several Marriot properties have their own pages, although they vary greatly in their content. The Wyndham brand has a Facebook page that has postings several times a day; however the majority of the postings are very similar in content. Many of their individual properties keep up pages as well, and the majority of them are more thorough than the

whole chain's page. The Accor Facebook page primarily posts pictures of destinations where they have properties, although they do not speak much about employees, philanthropy or customer appreciation. Several individual properties have updated Facebook pages that feature the property and its surrounding areas.

### Photo Sharing Platforms

Instagram and Pinterest are two social media platforms whose main purpose is photo sharing. Instagram's home page displays photos that users have posted, and their followers can like and comment on the photos. Pinterest is an interactive pin board where users can post their own photos and also re-post the photos of others. All of the chains examined utilized both platforms to different degrees.

Each of the hotel chains within Intercontinental maintains an Instagram account, and some properties also have accounts that are specific to their location. The researcher examined several of these pages and reported that almost all were current and had consistent postings. The main brand's account had 15,500 followers at the time of the research. Hilton maintains an official Instagram account as well, which had 19,100 followers at the time of the research. The page posted a new picture almost every day, and many individual properties within the brand have accounts as well. Marriot's Instagram has very vibrant postings several times a day of different properties, cuisine, and destinations around the world. This brand had the most followers at 27,400 and several individual properties maintain accounts on the app as well. Wyndham Worldwide does not have an Instagram account, but many of the brand's subsidiary companies do. Very few accounts for specific hotel properties within the brand could be

located, and even fewer were current. Accor Hotels also does not have an Instagram; however some regional areas do maintain pages and update them several times a day. The followers on these accounts are low, at only around 2,000. These accounts are also almost completely in foreign languages, so English speaking customers will have trouble benefiting from the advertising. For reference, some of the most popular Instagram accounts are held by celebrities, and many have an upwards of 20 million followers.

Another great tool for photo sharing in social media is Pinterest, which is utilized by many of the chains. Intercontinental has a Pinterest page that has very few followers. The majority of the content of their board is postings of their properties and appears to have been updated recently. As was similar with Instagram, many Intercontinental regions and specific properties have their own pages that are much more in-depth and are updated more frequently. The Hilton Hotel Pinterest is very dynamic, and has boards that reflect many aspects of the brand. Some of these boards are specific to one destination, some are geared towards Mother's Day, and some are pictures of several Hilton Hotel pools. Although not all the boards are updated often, the content is well-rounded and includes several attractions for potential customers. Marriot does not have an official Pinterest page, but its various properties appear to maintain a page for almost every hotel within the brand. These pages are all rich with pictures of the hotel and their surrounding areas, popular events in the area and their hotel cuisine. Wyndham Hotels and Resorts have a Pinterest page although it isn't used greatly. The page only displays pictures from 19 destinations and the boards have not been updated recently. Upon further investigation the researcher found few pages for specific hotel properties within the Wyndham brand. Accor Hotels maintains a Pinterest page, although it is difficult to find.

The page itself has several boards with pictures of destinations, travel quotes and architecture. The boards appear to be updated recently, although the same cannot be said for many pages for specific Accor properties.

### Print Advertisements

Print advertisements are a long standing method of advertising for businesses. All of the hotel chains examined utilized print ads, but they do so in varying degrees. Intercontinental Hotels and Resorts do not appear to have a print advertising campaign that encompasses their entire brand. Rather, many specific properties or regions have created their own advertisements. Many of these ads have similar design elements like their logo, font, and text color but for the most part they appear to be independent of the brand. Hilton has run a print advertising campaign for the past three years that is based on their "Stay Hilton. Go Everywhere" slogan. The ads feature guests enjoying travel experiences in many destinations, and each features a verb that embodies the experience and the destination. For example, one advertisement showcases a man standing in a pool looking out over a beach landscape. The text reads, "Stay Hilton. Go Float. Go Refresh. Go Cabo." and is identified as the Hilton Los Cabos Beach & Golf Resort. The campaign includes many other destinations, but it is clear by the design and layout of the ads that it is a cohesive campaign. Similar to Hilton, Marriot has an advertising campaign that has many similar advertisements. Each ad is a particular color scheme and includes a phrase about what a customer can accomplish as a guest of the property. For example, one advertisement is a green and yellow color scheme and shows a professionally dressed man walking away from a hotel room. The text reads, "Where purpose meets ease."

Alongside of the graphic is the classic red Marriott logo, and also says “Rooms designed to deliver. So you can too.” The bottom text describes the location as the London Marriott Hotel Grosvenor Square. Wyndham Hotels has several recent print advertisements, but none of them appear to be a part of a cohesive advertising campaign. Many of the ads feature the same font and blue text, but that is the only aspect which translates between them. Accor appears to have a print advertising campaign, however only a few different examples could be found and one of them was not in English. One of these ads shows a woman lying on a massage table against a very relaxed and calm background of curtains. The ad says, “Feeling at home wherever you go. Bali. Inner smile.” The bottom of the printing talks about the amount of hotels the company has worldwide and includes the logos for each of their brands. This section is the same in each different advertisement within the campaign, as well as a few birds flying the background which are a nod to Accor’s logo.

### Commercials

Although commercials can be expensive to produce and broadcast, they can reach a very large audience. The researcher was able to find commercials for each hotel chain, although the recency of the ads varied. The Intercontinental Hotel Group has an ad that was posted to their YouTube channel recently in February 2015. The video is fairly long at one minute and 40 seconds, which makes it unlikely to be used on television. The commercial follows a woman walking through many different doors that each lead to a different experience or landscape. The text at the end of the commercial says, “A city is its secrets. Discover them with us.” The closing shot is of the Intercontinental logo and

their website address. Although this was the most recent, individual brands within the company also have their own advertisements. Hilton Worldwide has a commercial posted on YouTube from mid-2014. At a length of 30 seconds it is short enough to be broadcast on television. The commercial follows a family of four on their weekend getaway to the shore. At the end of the ad a narrator talks about the various brands of the company, and highlights Hilton and Embassy Suites as being family friendly. It also shows a special \$95 rate per night for select weekends and destinations. Marriot has a commercial on YouTube as well which is 30 seconds and ideal for television broadcasting. The ad follows many people in different destinations, some relaxing, some working. The end of the commercial says to travel brilliantly with Marriot, and shows a link to their website. No commercials could be found for the whole Wyndham brand, although some of the brands within the company did have videos posted to YouTube. Accor hotels has a 30 second video that was posted on YouTube in 2012 which shows many people at a business meeting. The employees are all day dreaming about what their hotel room after the meeting will be like, however none of them are 100% sure what they are going to get. The narrator at the end of the ad talks about how with Accor Hotels you will always know what you're booking. The closing scene of the commercial is of the company's logo as well as the brands that it includes. Although each hotel chain examined utilized advertising strategies, they vary greatly. A discussion of these findings follows in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As in necessary with any business, hotel chains need to advertise their properties in order to retain past customers and attract new ones. There are endless options that businesses can utilize to advertise, and it is a crucial aspect to maintaining a successful hotel brand. This concluding chapter will include the following: a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, limitations, conclusions based on research questions, implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to analyze advertising tactics used by hotel chains for their effectiveness and to determine the best practices for the industry. The researcher wanted to examine traditional and new advertising platforms that are in use by hotel chains and evaluate each brand's use of the platforms. The platforms of interest were print advertising, television ads, social media, photo sharing websites, and the researcher also examined the main webpages of each chain. The various advertising campaigns were analyzed not only for content, but also their visual appeal, recency and ease of access.

Television advertisements can be extremely effective for businesses, although the price to produce and broadcast them can be too much for some companies to manage. Online advertising by way of social media is much more attainable and can be fairly simple to initiate, but if it isn't kept current it isn't very beneficial. Large scale organizations, like states and countries, also rely on advertising to encourage travelers to

visit their destination. Although the campaigns for tourism destinations vary greatly from hotel chain advertisements, they require many of the same techniques that smaller business advertising does. Businesses of any size rely on brand loyalty, which keeps return customers coming back. The level of customer loyalty can vary greatly, with some consumers enduring periods of dissatisfaction, but still staying committed to a brand.

The researcher examined the advertisements of the five largest hotel chains in the world and evaluated them based on a matrix of qualitative questions. The most recent advertisements and content for the chain were found, and then the researcher answered the questions to determine the effectiveness of the ads. It was determined that the hotel chains in questions utilized each platform to a different extent, and their effectiveness varied.

### Discussion

Of the five hotel chains examined, all were utilizing social media as a platform for advertising. Not all were using it effectively however, which can actually do more harm than good. In particular, Accor Hotels' social media was very weak. Even when the brand used Facebook, the posts were infrequent and were limited almost exclusively to pictures. Facebook enables a business to interact and communicate with their customers, but Accor is missing out on that opportunity. Furthermore they do not utilize Instagram, which is an extremely popular photo sharing platform. The hotels within the brand that have accounts are used intermittently and many of the posts are in foreign languages, so English speaking customers will find them useless. Wright, Khanfar, Harrington and Kizer (2010) show that social media is most effective when it is current and utilized

often, which is consistent with the results of this analysis. To better use their social media the researcher suggests that Accor Hotels focus on keeping their advertising platforms current and using the platforms to their full potential.

Although each of the brands that the researcher examined had commercials available online, they varied greatly. Hilton and Marriot had several videos on their YouTube page which varied from scripted commercials to behind-the-scenes interviews with hotel staff. Not only did these brands have a diverse group of videos, new content was added frequently. Based upon the videos posted on YouTube, the researcher determined that the brands that posted more videos, and more often, had much higher views of the videos than those brands that didn't post content often. Of the videos posted, not many were produced commercials that could be broadcast on television. According to research, television advertising is very effective for getting customers to consider a brand and the hotel brands examined should think about spending the money to put their ads on television. Jin and Lutz (2013) noted that people are exposed to 550 TV ads weekly and almost 29,000 annually. The researcher only looked at videos posted online for this analysis, but upon further investigation it was determined that the chains rarely broadcasted the commercials on television.

With the increase of smart phones and online accessibility, consumers aren't buying magazines and newspapers as much as they used to. The advertisements used in these platforms are still important, but businesses should be aware of their limitations in comparison to multimedia advertising. Most of the chains examined had current print advertisements in various travel magazines, although these only target a very specific market. To be more effective, print advertisements should be targeted towards the

everyday customer who likely does not yet have an allegiance to a particular brand. Advertisements will be more effective on those customers that aren't loyal to a brand yet, so the researcher suggests that the chains put their ads in publications like local newspapers and non-subject specific magazines. Oliver (1999) discovered that a customer can believe the brand is better than others simply because of information they have received by way of advertising. Print advertisements can be effective as advertising tools, but businesses need to be aware of their decreased viewing by customers.

The recommendations stated previously do have limitations as they are only based on a best practices external analysis, so similar research could be completed using real hotel customers and surveys. The research was also completed within two weeks, so there was a time restraint that limited the researcher. By only accessing online resources the researcher was assuming that most customers have access to the internet, which is not necessarily the case for everyone. An argument could be made that this study could be recreated to only include print and public advertisements that someone who doesn't use the internet or social media might see. Further research could also include more platforms of advertising such as billboards, Twitter, online advertisements and promotional emails. The researcher has previously worked for one of the chains examined in this study, so despite best efforts, this former relationship could have impacted the results. Although these limitations were present, the information gathered was sufficient for the study.

There is no question that advertising is necessary for all businesses, but it is essential for hotel chains that are seeking to gain new customers for their hotels. The platforms for advertising are endless, and chains need to ensure that they are keeping

current and using them effectively. Social media platforms are an easy and relatively low cost advertising tool that many hotels aren't using to their full potential, but if they are used, hotel chains will see enhanced brand customer loyalty and ownership of the brand. Traditional advertising techniques like print ads are still effective too, but businesses shouldn't rely on these as much in the growing technological world. The impacts of this best practices analysis are important for not only the five chains examined, but hotels of any size.

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. It is essential that hotel chains utilize as many platforms for social media advertising as possible, but the content must be thorough and current.
2. Despite the brands having videos posted online they should also consider broadcasting them more widely on television.
3. Print advertisements are still a viable form of advertising, but shouldn't be the primary platform for hotel chain promotion.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Social media advertising should be utilized on a regular and consistent basis.
2. Consider giving a customer the ability to post for the chain for a day and document their travels.
3. Eliminate any advertising platforms that aren't being used properly.

4. Television commercials should be a priority in order to attract many customers quickly.
5. Future research could be helpful to determine how customers choose a hotel chain and which advertising platforms most influenced their decision.

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## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Instrument

	Intercontinental	Hilton	Marriot	Wyndham	Accor
Does the chain have a current print ad?					
Does the chain have any television commercials?					
Do any of the advertisements include any information about price?					
Do any of the advertisements include any information about amenities?					
Does the chain have a customer loyalty program?					
Which of the following social media platforms does the chain use? (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube)					
Does the chain's main website page allow the guest to make reservations?					
Does the chain's main website page show more than one destination?					
Is the chain's main website page compatible on a mobile device?					
Has the chain posted a new video advertisement in the last month?					
Does the chain have an app?					