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# Reactions of Generation Y to Luxury Hotel Twitter Promotions

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# Reactions of Generation Y to Luxury Hotel Twitter Promotions

## **Abstract**

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites (Evans, 2008). In today's society, social media refers mainly to websites including (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+. The most popular and fastest growing of these social media venues is Twitter. Twitter was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, and Biz Stone. Since 2006, almost 200 million users across the globe have joined the site; over 140 million tweets are "tweeted" daily (Picard, 2011). Twitter took advantage of a niche in the market, allowing 140 characters to express an idea or emotion. Twitter has changed the media world as a news source, tweeting real-time information from stories that arise (Picard, 2011). In the lodging industry, methods of social media to promote hotels are becoming more popular. Twitter, in particular, has emerged as a "moment of truth" for a hotel, demonstrating how instantly and tactfully hotels react to the thoughts and opinions of former, current, and potential guests. Studies have also suggested that "online social life mirrors offline relationships in many ways" (Moore, p. 440). Therefore, Twitter accounts should be viewed as an extension of the hospitality business, in particular lodging, echoing the relationship a customer would feel upon arrival to the hotel.

Hotel marketing teams have reached "great success by driving demand to hotels through increased online advertising and web optimization" (Chipkin, 2013). This has increased overall customer views of the hotel without affecting the rate strategy of the property or brand. Twitter presence could, potentially, help a patron decide between two hotels, "If a promotion, experience or package is unique, it definitely works to generate bookings and helps put you first in a consumer's mind when they are choosing between two or three hotels," says Rachel Harrison of Hyatt Andaz (Chipkin, 2013).

Hotel companies worldwide are investing in their social media networks. Certain hotels (i.e. W Barcelona) are even hiring social media and marketing managers whose responsibilities include instant Twitter feedback (Appendix 1). The purpose behind this investment is to maximize these social media accounts, creating feedback from all potential guests, allowing them to react to both positive and negative word of mouth. Social media managers have recently encountered an opportunity; Generation Y is becoming a target demographic. As Generation Y enters the workforce and begins a career, the exposure to hotel brands and types will increase. Luxury hotel stays are becoming more financially reachable to these Generation Y guests because of their career advancements (Fields, 2013). This study will serve to evaluate the added benefits from the adoption of social media channels, particularly Twitter.

## **Keywords**

Twitter, Social Media, Generation Y, Advertising, WSBE, Hospitality Management

## **Subject Categories**

Hospitality Administration and Management | Marketing

**Honors Thesis**

REACTIONS OF GENERATION Y TO LUXURY HOTEL TWITTER PROMOTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

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## **I. LITERATURE REVIEW**

*"I had (and still have) a dream that the Web could be less of a television channel and more of an interactive sea of shared knowledge. I imagine it immersing us as a warm, friendly environment made of the things we and our friends have seen, heard, believe, or have figured out. I would like it to bring our friends and colleagues closer, in that by working on this knowledge together we can come to better understandings."*

—Tim Berners Lee, 1995

Consumers today are besieged by advertising, news articles, Internet communications, and direct mail, all communicating overwhelming amounts of information. In addition, increases in the number and variety of goods, services, and shopping opportunities (malls, Internet, etc.) broaden the sphere of consumer choice, each complicating the decision-making process. This

study concentrated on Generation Y, members of which are still in their consumer development stages and represent collectively 116 million consumers. The following sections will discuss what social media is, why hotels are adopting Twitter, the differences between generation X and Y, and how hotels are using this technology to market their properties.

### **The Development of Social Media and Twitter**

As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, social media includes “forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and micro-blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (i.e. videos)” (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks, while social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites (Evans, 2008). Social media has a number of characteristics that make it fundamentally different from traditional media such as newspapers, television, books, and radio; in particular, the sharing feature of social media leads to comments and revisions of stories by the audience to update the content. These characteristics do not mean that social media is used in place of such media, but rather implies a different set of tools that can be used to complement what one is doing now. In today’s society, social media referrers mainly to websites including (but not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+.

The first recognized social network launched in 1997; SixDegrees.com allowed users to create profiles, list Friends, and browse Friends lists (Boyd, p. 214). Friendster launched in 2002, with a niche of “friends of friends” connection; Friendster was the first social network allowing friends to view other friends’ lists, under the assumption that “friends of friends” make for better romantic partners; although, soon enough “Fakesters” were spamming the website and

users lost interest (Boyd, 2007, p. 215). MySpace launched in Santa Monica, California in 2003, soon to be used popularly as a marketing tool for Indie-rock bands. Able to differentiate itself often, MySpace often updated feature after consumer reviews were posted. Unlike Friendster, teenager began to join MySpace “en masse,” attracting a new demographic. MySpace soon developed three distinct crowds: musicians/artists, teenagers, and post-college urban social crowd (Boyd, 2007, p. 217). Initially, Facebook emerged to support distinct college networks, opened originally only to Harvard students. As Facebook expanded, it maintained that members have a university email address, in order to upkeep the exclusivity of the site. Upon expansion to all demographics, Facebook members still required an appropriate email address. Facebook expanded its network by allowing outside developers to create Applications, allowing users to personalize their profiles (Boyd, 2007, p. 218).

Twitter was founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey (@Jack), Evan Williams (@Ev), and Biz Stone (@Biz). The scholastic definition of twitter is “a short burst of inconsequential information” and defines the social media site and its purpose. In March 2006, the first tweet was sent, “just setting up my twttr” (Picard, 2011). Since 2006, almost 200 million users across the globe have joined the site; over 140 million tweets are “tweeted” daily. Twitter took advantage of a niche in the market, allowing 140 characters to express an idea or emotion. Twitter has changed the media world as news sources tweet real-time information from stories that arise (Picard, 2011).

### **Social Media Marketing**

In April 1994, the first “spam” email, “Green Card,” was sent over the internet (Evans, pp. 6-7). As successful as “Green Card” was, anti-spam software soon flooded the market. According to Evans, “the arrival of spam — on a communications channel that recipients had



control over — shattered a peaceful coexistence that had been in place for the past 30 years” (Evans, 2008, p. 7). Spam resulted in a slower internet connection, a full inbox, and an overall degrading online experience for consumers (Evans, 2008, p. 7). In terms of marketing, spam had ruined the positive reputation of advertisements. Spam emails were often deceptive and unentertaining, going against all for which the marketing industry had worked (Evans, 2008, p. 8).

*“Consumers feel overwhelmed by intrusive, irrelevant ads. The result: a backlash against advertising — manifesting itself in the growing popularity of do-not-call lists, spam filters, online ad blockers, and ad skipping on digital video recorders (DVRs). Marketing campaigns of the future must facilitate consumers’ cross-channel search for information, going beyond the brand promises made in traditional advertising.”*

—Jim Nail, Forrester Research

Following anti-spam campaigns came pop-up blockers and other devices designed to suppress online advertisements. Advertisements were not longer viewed as marketing techniques but as online annoyances that prevented complete access to the internet. Now, according to Evans and a “Passive ad Avoidance” study completed by Jakob Nielsen, consumers not avoid even looking at online advertisements (Appendix 7) (Evans, 2008).

Social media marketing refers to the process of gaining website traffic or attention through social media sites. Social media has become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with internet access. Increased communication for organizations fosters brand awareness and often, improved customer service. Additionally, social media serves as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns. Social media marketing has developed with the growth of social media. Now, consumers can *choose* to

“follow” or “like” specific brands online. Without too much research, this creates a demand for social media marketing managers. However, consumers still continue to avoid advertisements on the internet, including social media (Evans, 2008). This study will serve to highlight social media practices, particularly in Twitter, that reduce ad-avoidance techniques.

### **The Role of Twitter in Today’s Society**

In their book That Used to Be Us, Thomas Friedman and Michael Mandelbaum explain how the world is “flattening” (Friedman, 2012). Now, a student in Bangkok can connect with a friend in New York and another in Los Angeles at the same time. Social media enables these friends to stay connected constantly (e.g. Twitter and Facebook). In recent studies, “millennials were also more likely to report that they regularly follow brands on Twitter” (Moore, p. 440). Social media allows constant interaction between brands and customers.

The presence of social media in today’s community publishes instant reactions. In the 2013 Super Bowl XLVII between the Baltimore Ravens and the San Francisco 49ers, Twitter played a large role, both planned and unplanned. Budweiser promoted a classic Clydesdales advertisement, but suggested the trend “#Clydesdales” to accompany it. The trend on Twitter target emotional responses from horse-lovers watching the game (Appendix 2). The responses began directly after the commercial and continued to trend in the days following the Super Bowl.

Social media has shifted toward new responsibilities: reporting news, advertising deals, posting jobs, and acting as a customer service support center. No longer is Twitter simply a minute by minute update of your friends’ status, but it now provides a platform for companies, such as AT&T, to reach out to their customers. AT&T for example has twitter accounts named @ATTNews, @ATTDeals, @ATTJobs, @ATTCustomerCare, etc.” (Coon, 2010). Each of these accounts, as visible through the Twitter handle, or name, specializes in a key business of

AT&T. Industry professionals agree, “Of all the communications channels, Twitter offers the quickest way to issue a statement because it’s mobile and instantaneous... Blog entries are the next fastest, followed by Web site postings and press releases issued via a wire service” (Roberts, 2009). Job postings, like those found on @ATTjobs, are also accessible via LinkedIn, the social network focusing on professional development. Corporations are beginning to use this interactive media in their search for job applicants. For example, “The HR team at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts is taking a more proactive approach to recruitment. In addition to vetting applicants based on social profiles, they also head hunt potential employees via sites such as LinkedIn, said Debbie Brown, VP of HR for the Toronto-based hotel company.” (Mayock, 2012)

Negative social media attention has never been so apparent as in the 2009 case of United Airlines. Dave Carroll, a country music artist, witnessed United Airlines throwing, and breaking, his Taylor guitar as they loaded luggage. As a musician, he uploaded “United Breaks Guitars,” a YouTube video that, today, has over twelve million views. According to the Huffington Post, this incident cost United Airline \$180 million in lost patronage, reply advertisements, and overall reputation re-structure (Huffington Post, 2009). Because of the ease and access of social media with modern technology, companies must be aware of the operations as to maintain their online presence.

### **Why Hotels Are Adopting Twitter?**

As technologies develop across all segments of the professional work environment, each development is evaluated. There are five factors influencing the adoption of technology in a particular segment: (1) relative advantage, (2) compatibility, (3) complexity, (4) trialability, and (5) visibility (Namasivayam, 2000). Relative advantage refers to the advantages of acquiring a new technology relative to the disadvantages of not acquiring such. Compatibility measures how

well new technology matches current technology in the desired area. Complexity measures whether the new acquisition would be too complex to introduce or would be appropriate in the setting. Trialability refers to the ease of which a company can try a new product without rearranging their entire network. Finally, visibility refers to the visible benefits of acquiring such technology (Namasivayam, 2000).

Social media continues to be a developing concept for marketing professionals across all industry segments, particularly in the lodging segment of the hospitality industry. In terms of these five factors, social media is evaluated as the following:

(1) **Relative Advantage:** The advantage of having a social media presence is often beneficial for these companies. There is no cost to register on social media sites and the company will gain free advertising from an additional online presence.

(2) **Compatibility:** Social media networks, assuming one is viewing them in a traditional browser, requires no additional software apart from an internet browser, or even a smart phone (only for added convenience).

(3) **Complexity:** Compared to building company websites, social media accounts are simple. Designed for all to create an online page, social media sites are basic, structured websites that allow anyone to create a page, beginner to expert.

(4) **Trialability:** Because no additional software is required, the trialability of Twitter is relatively easy. Companies must, however, be certain to operate within corporate guidelines.

(5) **Visibility:** This study will serve to evaluate the added benefits from the adoption of social media channels.

## Hotels Using Twitter

Social media trends continue to emerge in our society. At the very least, hotels have a Facebook site, if not an additional Twitter account or another social networking presence. According to Milestone Insight, social media “has not only become one of the critical tools to interact with customer but is also considered one of the key elements impacting organic search and ranking for the hotel” (Aggarwal, 2010). Twitter has gained popularity as it creates personal, direct contact with guests. Patrons can tweet at a hotel with a question, comment, or even complaint, and the hotel Twitter account manager, acting as the voice of the hotel, responds almost instantly. For example, when I personally tweeted at W Hotels of New York City with a photo I took, @WHotelsNYC responded almost instantly (Appendix 3).

Twitter is also developing as a source of useful information for those guests constantly on the go. Hotels are using “Twit Pics” to post real time photos of events or views at the hotel. For example, W Austin posted a real-time photo about their second anniversary opening, and W Barcelona, halfway across the world, retweeted it (Appendix 4). These types of posts are promoting feedback in the form of “retweets” or “replies.” However, recently, hotels have begun to use Twitter as a form of promotion, tweeting about sales, discounts, special rates, etc.

According to Ian McConnical’s article “Twelve Twitter Tools Everyone Should Know About,” survey results have shown that 54% of event coordinators use Twitter. Of these “tweeps,” or those people active on Twitter, 82% use Twitter to create a “buzz” around an event and 68% use Twitter in regards to public relations (McConnical, 2010). In addition to creating hype, Twitter accounts, and a social media presence in general, can establish a reputation for a hotel with an expertise (Milestone Insight, 2010). For example, W Barcelona’s Facebook page and Twitter account expose their passion for fashion, music, and design, apparent by their post

on December 10, 2012 at 1:00pm EST, “Discover Sergi Pons, an incredibly talented photographer” (@W\_Barcelona, 2012). By posting this, and many others like it, the @W\_Barcelona account has become a popular account for Twitter followers interested in fashion, music and design.

### **Generations X and Y**

Obvious generational gaps have developed between Generation X and Generation Y. Most notably, a difference in attitude and the use of technology has created these gaps. Generation X is identified as those born between the years of 1964 and 1977 and Generation Y includes those born between 1978 and 1998 (Barber, in press).

In recent studies of generational differences, “some of the characteristics of Generation X in the USA included: more collaborative, less hierarchical, more altruistic, more comfortable with women bosses, more skilled in management, more tech-savvy [compared to the baby boomers], balanced, candid in their communications and, self-reliant” (Josiam et al., 2006). Due to their age difference over Generation Y, generally Generation X is more experienced in the hospitality industry and currently holds the majority of employment.

However, “Generation Y’ers do not hesitate to tell others what they want. They have had better education, are [most] tech-savvy and value personal creativity. Generation Y’ers desire a more structured workplace. Although they respect titles and positions, they want a relationship with the boss; oftentimes, this may clash with Generation X’s (and their boss’s) work style (Thielfoldt, 2004). Because of the advanced education, Generation Y’ers often believe that they are entitled to a position or a preferred salary. Personal lives of the Generation Y are drastically different. According to Red Book Solutions, “Generation Y in particular is living a different lifestyle than previous generations—family structure no longer follows traditional patterns, and

conventional gender roles are no longer valued”. With a focus on work-life balance, personal fulfillment, and mass communication, Generation Y is emerging as one of the most distinctive generations yet (Red Book Solutions, 2010). This study will focus on the emerging market of Generation Y (also known as Millennial) and their technological habits, lifestyle choices, and overall feelings about advertisements.

### *Generational Differences in Regards to Technology*

When considering technology in general, research suggests that “Millennials are superiorly adept at using these technologies in their daily life compared to the older generations” (Moore, 2012, p. 441). When monitoring technology used by Generation Y, it was found that “young consumers most often use the internet for ‘mood enhancement’ and ‘experiential learning’” (Moore, 2012, p. 437). Generation Y uses technology to make lives easier and, oftentimes, to “gather information on the go” (Moore, 2012, p. 442). This is precisely why “millennials are more likely to access social networks from their mobile phone.” (Moore, 2012, p. 441)

Research has shown that “millennial respondents indicate significantly higher usage of interactive media compared to both Generation X and boomers across 14 applications.” (Moore, 2012, p. 436) Interactive media, specifically social networks, allows Millennials to connect with other across the globe. Not only connecting with friends, “millennials use interactive technologies for multiple purposes: to connect with retailers or brands online to download coupons online, to source entertainment and utility applications, etc” (Moore, 2012, p. 442).

### *Generational Differences in Buying Patterns*

Generation Y’s interaction with brands and retailers is surprising considering that studies “suggest a clear indication that Millennials do not use the Internet to purchase products... despite

their noted frequent use of interactive technologies to connect with retailer and brands”. In fact, when compared to Generation X, Generation Y is *less* likely to purchase products online (Moore, 2012, p. 441). Therefore, the research suggests that Generation Y uses an interactive online relationship with retailers and brands simply to gather more information about the product.

### *Generational Differences in Lifestyle and Education*

Generation Y’s connectivity has created an entirely new manner of learning. Not only does Generation Y connect with friends, but “they use the internet for contacting professors, conducting research, working on projects with fellow-students, and receiving messages from academic-oriented email services” (McMillan, 2006, p. 75). Modern universities have evolved to include interactive media, creating classes that are entirely online that allow conversation between student and professor from remote locations. This has led to an overall higher level of education among Generation Y’ers.

Work-life balance, although important to both generations, has a different meaning between the two. Generation X values family and the time spend with them. Generation Y oftentimes considers their social life, outside of work, the most important aspect. As time progresses, “the general trend [shows] both men and women getting married later or opting out of the practice altogether” (The Huffington Post, 2013).

### *Generational Differences in Thoughts on Advertising*

With Generation Y spending additional time on the internet, advertisers have found a new platform through which to promote products. This advertising sparked interest in Generation X, who have become more active in purchasing items online compared to Generation Y. Internet marketing has had the opposite effect on Generation Y.



Generation Y understands that they are a target market, and “millennial consumers (i.e. US college student sample) who recognize that they are targets of persuasion tend to develop negative attitudes towards the persuader” (Moore, 2012, p. 437). “Registering” the brand occurs when the consumer associates a specific mentality with a particular product or brand. “The danger is that [Generation Y] may register the brand, even though they do not click-through. If this evocation of the brand is accompanied by annoyance, it could have an adverse effect on the brand advertised” (Rettie, 2003, p. 10). The research suggests that marketers should be aware of the tendency to irritate the millennial customer with over-advertisement or inflated promises (Moore, 2012, p. 437).

Social media, particular Twitter, creates a new, modern advertising technique. Studies show that 78% of consumers trust peer recommendations and only 14% trust advertisements (Coon, 2010). As an interactive media platform, Twitter allows consumers to advertise for the brand, rather than the reverse.

### **Why Hotels Want To Target Generation Y**

Generation Y is the generation with the most room for rapid development in the near future. As Generation Y begins to enter the work force at growing rates, hotels that do not target this market would miss out on an estimated seventy two million patrons born as part of Generation Y (Barber, forthcoming 2013). Social media is second nature to the “Millennials,” who are “plugged in” from the moment they wake up to the second they fall asleep. A strong, developed social media presence appeals to Generation Y, as they have worked to develop their own personal online accounts.

As Generation Y establishes its role in the work force, they also have started to demonstrate spending patterns. Traditional luxury travel used to consist of, what many consider,

“old money.” However, a 2011 American Express Business Insights report stated that “old money” only accounted for about 10% of the luxury market, and only account for 40% of the spending. Generation Y and Generation X patrons are accounting for the rest of the spending (Rubin, 2011).

According to Rob Davidson (2010), Senior Lecturer at Greenwich University School of Business, “[Generation Y is] commonly regarded as quite high-maintenance but we can’t ignore them because they are emerging as the biggest cohort in society.” Generation Y’ers account for one in three hotel guests, according to Red Book Solutions, and hotels are beginning to tailor their amenities to target these customers and their needs. (Red Book Solutions, 2010).

## **II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The purpose of this study is to identify the role of Twitter accounts of luxury hotels within Generation Y. By analyzing this information, I will evaluate the effectiveness of promotions via Twitter. Effectiveness specifically refers to the amount of Twitter reaction to a tweet, including retweets, replies, favorites, and quotes. During my research, I plan to answer the following questions:

1. What are the generational preferences of Generation Y, particularly in terms of social media?
2. What percentage of Generation Y’ers follow luxury hotels on Twitter? Which brands?
3. What types of tweets (pictures, videos, links, or classic) appeal to Generation Y?
4. Do promotions via Twitter create the desired Twitter activity (retweets, favorites, replies)?

### III. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to (1) identify Generation Y as a target market, (2) identify the popularity of hotel Twitter account trends. The collaboration of this research will identify the “best practices” of hotel Twitter promotion.

#### *Sample & Procedure*

After approval by the Internal Review Board, the survey (Appendix 5) was sent public. A link to the survey was distributed using social media accounts of the primary researcher (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and university undergraduate email database (University of New Hampshire). To select participants, a snowball convenience based sampling method was used. Initial participants were asked to respond and then pass the link on to others. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. This survey is hosted on SurveyMonkey.com.

#### *Measures*

The survey begins with an introduction outlining the purpose of the study. Participants are introduced to the primary researcher and understand all the implications of completing the survey. The first question asks what year the subject was born, identifying the subject as part of Generation Y. From there, the questions are of three (3) categories: Twitter account details, Twitter use questions, and social acceptance of Twitter use.

Twitter account detail questions ask whether the subject uses the account for social or professional use, if they follow luxury hotels on the accounts, and if so, which ones. Twitter use questions ask about preference in tweets and other actions on Twitter (i.e. replies, retweets, and favorites). Questions regarding the social acceptance of Twitter ask about those around the participant. An example of this question would be, “Most people around you use Twitter” and would ask the subject to answer on a scale of “Extremely Agree” to “Extremely Disagree.”

All participants who answer yes to “Do you have a Twitter account?” are directed to the full survey. Those participants who do not have a Twitter account are redirected to the end of the survey and are longer eligible to participate.

This is one of the first studies of its kind, using primary data to sort the effectiveness of Twitter promotions.

#### *Statistical Analysis*

The data is analyzed in the aggregate using statistical procedures such as descriptive statistics (SPSS). The frequency of answers to “If yes, please identify” questions will be converted into descriptive statistics, where possible.

### **IV. RESULTS**

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

The study suggests that of the 124 respondents who have a Twitter account, 122 of them belong to Generation Y (born between 1978-1998). When surveyed, the majority of Generation Y only tweets between one and five times daily, including 100% of those who follow luxury hotels on Twitter. Also, when asked, 51% of Generation Y tweeps only check their Twitter feed between one and five times daily.

Considering the apparent infrequency of Twitter use, hotel companies can understand that tweets must be interesting to Generation Y, or else each tweet is lost in the Twitter feed. Generation Y tweeps often use simple tweets or photos in their personal accounts, and they most often respond to tweets of this order: 1) simple tweets, 2) photos, 3) videos, and 4) links. Similarly, it is in the best interest of hotels to use hashtags, whether original or existing, as 95 of the 122 Generation Y tweeps surveyed use hashtags at minimum “sometimes.”

#### *Generation Y and Luxury Hotels on Twitter*

Of the 122 tweeting Generation Y respondents, only 5.7% follow at least one luxury hotel on Twitter. Common hotels that were followed include: The Ritz-Carlton, W Hotels, the Omni Hotels, and the Four Seasons Boston. In fact, those who were surveyed reported that they only consider Facebook or Trip Advisor when looking for hotel deals. Twitter and the company website had never been used.

This information suggests that hotels should not focus their Twitter efforts on promoting deals or advertising for the hotel. Due to the minimal traffic and the lack of research of hotels done on Twitter, it would be, essentially, a waste of time and effort to promote deals via Twitter.

#### *Generation Y Twitter Habits*

When surveyed, 59.3% of the tweeting members of Generation Y responded that they most often use a “simple tweet,” meaning a tweet without a link, photo, or video. Pictures were the second most popular tweet (48.3%), followed by links to another websites (34.7%). When surveyed, 44.9% ranked using videos last of most often used tweets.

The most common method of Twitter use is via smart phone. Of the Generation Y Tweeters surveyed, 82% describe their smart phone as their primary source of Twitter, both following and tweeting. More specifically, five of the seven members of Generation Y who have an active Twitter account and follow luxury hotel brands prefer to use their smart phone to access Twitter, the other two use their personal laptops. This suggests that, when tweeting, posts should be conducive to viewing via a mobile device.

#### *Thoughts on Advertising*

Studies have shown that Generation Y often feels targeted when they encounter an advertisement. Although 77% of the Generation Y tweeters surveyed say they agree that internet advertising is informative, 69% also agree that it is annoying. Further, 71% of those surveyed

agree that they “try to avoid looking at advertisements.” Unfortunately for online advertisements, 69% of Generation Y’ers reported that they “never click on internet advertising.”

Within the luxury hotel Twitter platform, the statistics vary. Of those who follow luxury hotels on Twitter, 86% find internet advertising informative and only 57% find it “annoying.” When asked if one tries to avoid looking at advertising, 71% of those who follow luxury hotels responded that they “agree” and 86% say they “never click on advertising.”

## **V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The results of the survey suggest that luxury hotel Twitter pages, although informative, are not a viable place to advertise promotions to Generation Y. The results show that the average Generation Y tweep only tweets and checks his/her Twitter feed between one and five times daily, much less than expected. Therefore, luxury hotels should adjust their approach accordingly.

Overall, Generation Y views internet advertising as an “annoying source of information.” Therefore, hotels should proceed with caution. The information distributed via Twitter should be informative, but not targeting. Hotels should attempt to avoid making Generation Y feel targeted, but rather inform them of details that may be of interest. These practices can help create the most useful Twitter account to both Generation Y tweeters and luxury hotels themselves.

## **VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The main limitation of this study was the small sample and size and use of a snowball sampling method based upon the primary researcher. Future studies should consider the use of a broader and more random sample for quantitative collection of data, as well as a qualitative component.

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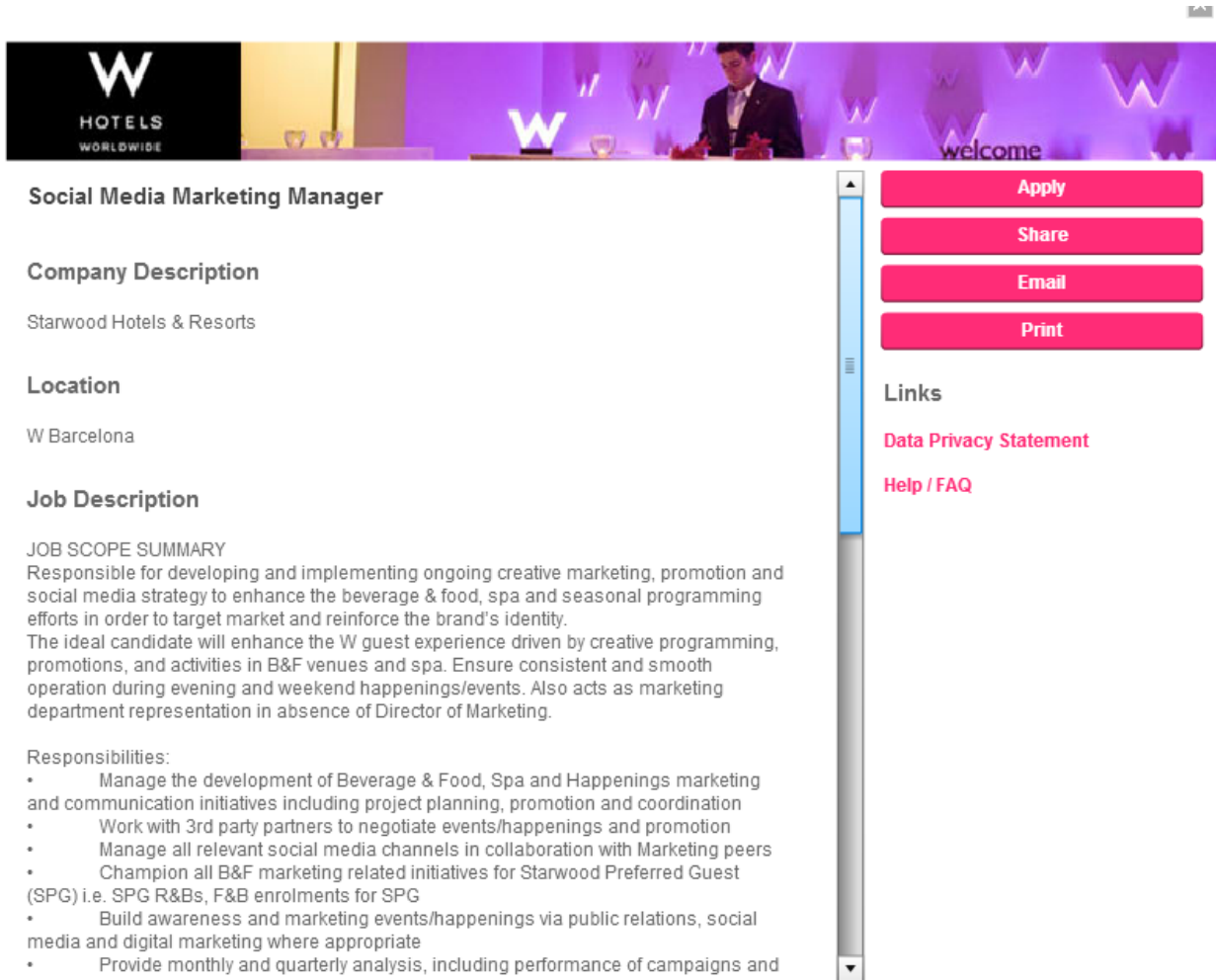
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## APPENDIX 1



**W HOTELS WORLDWIDE**

**Social Media Marketing Manager**

**Company Description**

Starwood Hotels & Resorts

**Location**

W Barcelona

**Job Description**

**JOB SCOPE SUMMARY**

Responsible for developing and implementing ongoing creative marketing, promotion and social media strategy to enhance the beverage & food, spa and seasonal programming efforts in order to target market and reinforce the brand's identity. The ideal candidate will enhance the W guest experience driven by creative programming, promotions, and activities in B&F venues and spa. Ensure consistent and smooth operation during evening and weekend happenings/events. Also acts as marketing department representation in absence of Director of Marketing.

**Responsibilities:**

- Manage the development of Beverage & Food, Spa and Happenings marketing and communication initiatives including project planning, promotion and coordination
- Work with 3rd party partners to negotiate events/happenings and promotion
- Manage all relevant social media channels in collaboration with Marketing peers
- Champion all B&F marketing related initiatives for Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) i.e. SPG R&Bs, F&B enrolments for SPG
- Build awareness and marketing events/happenings via public relations, social media and digital marketing where appropriate
- Provide monthly and quarterly analysis, including performance of campaigns and

**Apply**

**Share**

**Email**

**Print**

**Links**

[Data Privacy Statement](#)

[Help / FAQ](#)

### Starwood Careers – Social Media Marketing Manager

APPENDIX 2

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter thread. The first tweet is from Amanda Brown (@Amanda\_\_Brown) posted 7 minutes ago, asking why she is crying over a Budweiser Clydesdale commercial. The second tweet is from Geoffrey Nelson (@GeoffNelson) posted 2 hours ago, asking if the Clydesdale made him cry and if he wants to fight about it. The third tweet is from Melanie Nayer (@chic\_travel) posted 7 hours ago, asking if the Budweiser Clydesdale commercial got her and mentioning the Winter Equestrian Festival in Palm Beach. Below this tweet is a snippet of a news article titled "Horse-lovers race to Palm Beach for Winter Equestrian Festival" from Boston.com News (@BostonDotCom). The snippet discusses the timing of the festival in winter in Boston. The fourth tweet is from Sophia Bush (@SophiaBush) posted 15 hours ago, stating that the Clydesdale commercial was the best ever and she cried over it.

**Amanda Brown** @Amanda\_\_Brown 7m  
Why am I bawling over this #Budweiser #Clydesdale commercial??  
Expand

**Geoffrey Nelson** @GeoffNelson 2h  
So what if the #clydesdale made me cry?!? Wanna fight about it?  
Expand

**Melanie Nayer** @chic\_travel 7h  
Did the @Budweiser #Clydesdale commercial get you? The Winter Equestrian Festival in Palm Beach will help: [ht.ly/hoyHX](http://ht.ly/hoyHX) @ritzcarlton  
Expand

**Horse-lovers race to Palm Beach for Winter Equestrian Festival**

There's no better time to plan beach vacations than in the heart of winter in Boston. While you do run the risk of overlapping with Spring Break crowds and family vacations, Florida can offer some...

**ck Up**  
g New England and b

**Boston.com News** @BostonDotCom · Follow

**Sophia Bush** @SophiaBush 15h  
And yes, as we've already established, the #Clydesdale commercial was the best ever! I cried. So what? ;)  
Expand

Twitter: @KatherineWoods9 1

### APPENDIX 3



**W Hotels NYC** @WHotelsNYC

13 Nov

Love this shot! RT @katherinewoods9: Loved looking eye to eye with @WHotelsNYC today! [pic.twitter.com/PzFYYPod](http://pic.twitter.com/PzFYYPod)

Collapse ↩ Reply ↻ Retweet ★ Favorite ⋮ More

6:42 AM - 13 Nov 12 · Details

Twitter: @KatherineWoods9 2

## APPENDIX 4

 **W Barcelona** @W\_Barcelona 9 Dec  
Cheers for two years @WHotelATX. Happy birthday wishes from your fans in Barcelona. [pic.twitter.com/SWJoAP9w](https://pic.twitter.com/SWJoAP9w)  
[Hide photo](#) [Reply](#) [Retweet](#) [Favorite](#) [More](#)



Twitter: @KatherineWoods93

## APPENDIX 5

### Online Survey Questions

1. What year were you born?
2. Do you have a Twitter account?
  - Yes
  - No
3. If Yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Most people around me use Twitter?

Extremely Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Agree
5. Your Twitter account(s) used for
  - Personal use
  - Professional use
  - Both
6. Do you follow any luxury hotels on Twitter?
  - Yes
  - No
7. If yes, please identify: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Most people around you follow luxury hotels on Twitter?

Extremely Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Agree
9. Have you ever seen hotel promotions on Twitter (i.e. 50% off a one night's stay at a hotel?)
  - No
  - Yes
10. If yes, please identify: \_\_\_\_\_
11. If you saw these promotions, how likely is it that you would take advantage of them?

Extremely Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Likely
12. Most people around you select hotels through Twitter:

Extremely Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Agree
13. What type of Twitter posts do you use most?
  - Simple Tweets
  - Pictures
  - Videos



- Links

14. Please rank in order of which you most often use on Twitter (1 = most often, 4 = least often)

- Reply
- Retweet
- Favorite
- Quote

15. What sources do you use when looking for hotel deals?

- Trip Advisor
- Facebook
- Company Website
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

16. Please rank your attitudes toward social media advertising on the following scale:

Extremely Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Agree

- a) Good way to reach interesting sites
- b) Internet ads are informative
- c) Internet ads are useful
- d) Internet ads a time wasting diversion
- e) Prefer sites not to have advertising
- f) I never click on Internet ads
- g) Internet advertising annoying
- h) Internet ads are annoying as have little control
- i) Try to avoid looking at ads
- j) Ads offering 'free' prizes deceptive
- k) Accept ads as pay for content
- l) Would subscribe to ad free sites

## **APPENDIX 6**

### Twitter Accounts

1. @W\_Barcelona (W Barcelona)
2. @Marriott (Marriott International)
3. @FourSeasons (Four Seasons Hotels)
4. @MO\_Hotels (Mandarin Oriental Hotels)

## Appendix 7

### Heat Maps: Passive Ad Avoidance

#### Heat Maps: Passive Ad Avoidance

Passive ad avoidance — the practice of sitting within view or earshot of an ad but effectively ignoring it — has been documented by Jakob Nielsen and others through visualizations such as the *heat maps* shown in Figure 1.2. Using eye movement detection devices, maps of eye movement during page scans show that most consumers now know where to look...and where not to look. The advertisements in Figure 1.2 are the least-viewed areas on the page. Complete information on Jakob Nielsen's "Banner Blindness" study may be found at [www.useit.com/alertbox/banner-blindness.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/banner-blindness.html).

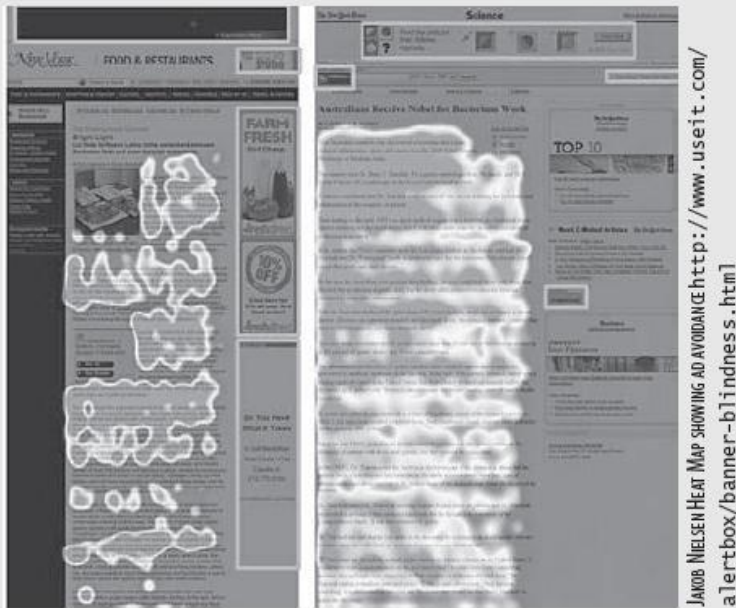


Figure 1.2 The Heat Map and Passive Ad Avoidance

(Evans, p. 10)