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**How to enhance the use of Influencer Marketing for
luxury hotels & PR companies?**

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3 INTRODUCTION

During my internship and after literature review and brainstorming some problems concerning influencer marketing were detected. A recent study from Hilker consulting (2019) suggests that influencer marketing is becoming constantly more important for companies. Each year advertisers are allocating more money for social media advertisement, this is a sign that they are noticing better return on investments in that sector (Emarketer.com, 2015). Compared to other forms of classic marketing, a cooperative research study found that influencer marketing has the ability to bring about 11 times more return on investment (Rusu, 2016).

Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influencers display a certain composition of desirable characteristics that give them the chance to influence a disproportionately wide range of other people. According to Tuten & Solomon (2013) influencers are opinion leaders whose advices are being taken seriously. They have the power to influence consumers attitudes, behaviors and opinions.

For the hospitality Industry influencer marketing is relatively new, compared to the fashion and cosmetic industry. However, there is a huge potential for them to do influencer marketing, as this industry is all about triggering emotions and creating desires of beautiful and interesting places. This is exactly where influencers are the best at. They create engagement and trust with a company and they know how to address their audience. If this audience is the target group of the hotel, influencer marketing could be the most efficient way of creating awareness

Instagram will be the platform used for influencer marketing in this study. According to Veissi (2007) Instagram has become the most used platform for influencer marketing. Instagram is a photo- and video- sharing app, that is nowadays considered as one of the most popular social media platforms. The latest statistics from 2019 show that the user base is growing and very active with 500 million people using it every day and 1 billion monthly active users (instagram-press.com, 2019) 2 million monthly advertisers (business.instagram.com, 2019).

Platforms like Instagram are still used by a relatively young audience. Corresponding to the data of Statista (2019) the majority of users is between 25 and 35. But the fact that in 2018 Instagram had 1 Billion users, leaves in the age group of 34-44 still 131 million and in the group of 45-54 years 68

million users (Worthy P., 2018). However, these users must be addressed and this is one of the goals of this study. To find the right influencers for the right target group of luxury hotels.

Nevertheless, from the use of influencer marketing certain issues arise. Especially for luxury hotels the target group is difficult to align with most of the influencers. Other ongoing problems for influencer marketing is how to check their reliability as well as measuring their value. Some studies already picked up these topics but it seems one of the most difficult problems to solve. Anyhow, these problems will be part of this study, especially focusing the side of the luxury hospitality sector.

On the other hand Luxury hotels must try to be attractive places in order to attract the influencers and convince them to tell their stories. Tourism destinations as well as hotels need media images, according to Jenkins (1999). Especially when the reader has never been in contact with the destination, media representation and the so called “story telling” is highly important (Jenkins, 1999).

Last but not least, this paper addresses the issue of sustainability. Sustainability can bring influencer marketing to another level by making it a meaningful tool that changes the world in a better way. Perhaps influencer marketing could be used to enhance sustainable values. According to Haaren et al. (2005) social media and other web tools could encourage social education by promoting a new way of awareness creation through interacting with users and passing on information in a greater social context. It could be the future of influencer marketing and it will be interesting to hear expert opinions about this topic and other future trends of influencer marketing.

Regarding the importance and actuality of this topic for the hospitality industry, as well as for PR agencies and regarding the detected issues, the research question will be: How to enhance the use of Influencer Marketing for luxury hotels & PR companies?

This issue will be analyzed at the company Schaffelhuber Communications. A German PR Agency that works for luxury hotels all around the world. The explored problems will be detected through a literature review and interviews of hotel/marketing managers of luxury hotels and influencers focusing on the luxury tourism sector.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING

2.1 Company Analysis

Schaffelhuber Communications

2.1.1 Introduction/Company Information

Schaffelhuber Communications was founded in 2006 and is an owner-managed PR agency located in Munich and Geneva. The internationally operating PR company focuses on tourism and lifestyle in the luxury segment. The company's clients are renowned 5 star hotels and resorts, ocean carriers and exclusive tour operators worldwide. Their high-end portfolio includes icons from the luxury hotel business, such as North Island, The Brando, Finca Cortesín and Wilderness Safaris among others. Schaffelhuber Communications is specialized in authentic concepts within the tourism industry and combines forward-thinking and ambitious concepts with the pillars that carry the agency, that as well are the values of the company – authenticity, new luxury and sustainability. The full-service PR consultancy manages the German speaking as well as international media markets and provides a unique, individual and personalized support for their clients. The motivated and dynamic team focuses on details and innovation in order to provide an authentic luxury travel experience (Schaffelhuber Communications, n.d.).

Schaffelhuber Communications is representing clients in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Benelux, Scandinavia, France, Russia, Kenya, Seychelles, Namibia, Maldives and many other countries. For each brand individual media concepts are being developed with a sensitive feeling for the wishes of their customers. Moreover, the company has additionally strategic alliances with PR-Agencies from the USA, UK, UAE and Asia (Virtualmarket.itb-berlin, 2019).

For many clients one of the most important parts of the philosophy of the company is sustainability. The company is part of many unique projects and has years of experience in sustainability matters as well as in the cooperation with wellness experts. Through the high-quality social networks of the managing owner Anke Schaffelhuber and through personal contacts to editors and publishers, brands can be established accurately according to their target market. Also, the close cooperation with airlines, tour operators and destinations enables an efficient and first-class implementation of creative projects.

2.1.2 Services

As a full service-PR company, Schaffelhuber Communications is providing a lot of different kind of services in order to make clients to enthuse with their product or brand. The company holds expert knowledge in high-class services and the lifestyle and travel industry and inspires to think differently in order to create and raise the awareness of the brand.

The different services they offer are PR & Brand Journalism which includes Brand PR; Product PR; Corporate PR; Personality PR and Event PR. The company tries to position brands in a surprising, innovative and multimedia way to reach the target audience in an emotional but authentic context. The goal is to increase visibility with customized concepts and to build a positive brand image.

Parts of these objectives are communication of the elaborated clients' USPs; creation of a basal press kit, creation and mailing of individual press releases; creative storytelling; development of a tailor-made PR strategy; organization of press trips; initiation of barter cooperation; media calls and media appointments with key journalists; organization and realization of media events; organization of photo shootings in the beauty and fashion segment; support regarding award applications; development of tailor-made social media PR strategy and finally media support and presentation on trade fairs. Another service is Corporate Relaunch, as Schaffelhuber communications has years of experience in the high-end tourism industry, they have developed a sense for premium companies and high quality brand appearances. For this reason, they also advise and support companies for redesigning the external brand appearance. The services in this field are analysis of the benchmark; design of brochures; positioning concepts; website; corporate design and newsletters.

The company also offers to enhance public brand awareness through Marketing. They collaborate with famous brand ambassadors, target group-related high-end companies by presenting the brand within a network of prosperous customers, decision-makers, opinion-leaders as well as other appropriate communicators. The tasks here are celebrity-marketing campaigns with appropriate brand ambassadors; benchmark analysis; cross-marketing campaigns with luxury brands; organization of marketing events and presentation and promotion on high-class charities and events.

Art & Culture, is the service of offering an access to additional exclusive target audiences. As Anke Schaffelhuber is a renowned art photographer, she has acquired an excellent network within the international art scene. Parts of this service are the organization of exhibitions at clients' properties:

Contact potential guests from the art scene; close alliances with established curators and new creative storytelling for the media. The last service is all about Photography. As the company knows that expressive and emotional photographic material is crucial for a company in order to be more appealing to the media and the target audience. Schaffelhuber Communications assists in acquiring new photographic material (Schaffelhuber Communications, n.d.)

2.1.3 Overview company's achievements

In celebrity marketing Schaffelhuber Communications has achieved a high-quality database of celebrity's in different kind of industries in order to rise brand awareness leading to a successful brand positioning. This Thesis will focus on celebrity marketing on Instagram, where the database of Schaffelhuber's celebrities could be extended by Influencers that match perfectly with their clients or at least it will give solutions of how to find those influencers in a more efficient way. It will also give clues to the Hotels in order to be more attractive for high-class influencers. One example of celebrity marketing of Schaffelhuber Communications was the former model, moderator, singer, songwriter and actress Eva Padberg who went to Soneva Fushi on the Maldives initiated through Schaffelhuber Communications in 2016. The same resort was visited in 2009 by another German model, actress and author Ursula Karven also initiated by Schaffelhuber Communications. This year (2019) Natascha Ochsenknecht, actress and former model went to Club Med Mauritius. Many star cooks came and are still coming to Coco Bodu Hiti on the Maldives, which is also counted to celebrity marketing just to mention a view cooperations.

The firm has achieved a vital network of companies and lead cost-effective and creative brand campaigns. In order to do cross marketing they work together with sport, fashion, lifestyle and cosmetic brands. Schaffelhuber Communications creates synergies by bringing Luxury Hotels together with target group-affine companies and thus increasing the reach of their brand. For example for one of their clients "Wilderness Safaris" they work together with the Home-Shopping Magazine BOGNER where they feature a combination of lifestyle, fashion with the luxury destination of Wilderness Safaris. At the end of the thesis, cross marketing campaigns should be facilitated with information of the influencer business. Especially in the section of sustainability. Hotels can make awareness of sustainability matters and sustainability influencers can help hotels to get more attention.

The company represents their clients in front of a high-class VIP audience of communicators and opinion leaders at exclusive charity events. Clients are able to benefit from the Schaffelhuber Communications international media connections who regularly attend their events. Examples of charity events that happened are: “Children for a better world” (Florian Langenscheidt); “Boris Becker Oktoberfest Trophy” and “GQ Cup”, GQ Men of the year”. In this section the thesis could help to get the right influencers who could authentically fit into these kind of events.

They also achieved cooperation’s with renowned partners in order to create event concepts. For these events Schaffelhuber organizes the pre-opening coordination of social media, and creation of media kit, PR management of the event, creation of guest list and incitation of VIPs and media. An example for such an event was for the restaurant TIAN in Vienna where over 36 renowned magazines reported about the event. These events are already being combined with social media influencers. However like mentioned before this thesis should help to manage influencer marketing better, find the right ones for specific events, measure their values and find ways to trust influencers (Schaffelhuber Communications, n.d.).

The following pictures show brands, Schaffelhuber Communications has had some successful achievements with in the categories of celebrity marketing, brand campaigns, cross marketing, charity events and cooperation’s with renowned partners.

Figure 1: Brands - Schaffelhuber Communications Achievements



Source: Website Schaffelhuber Communications (2019)



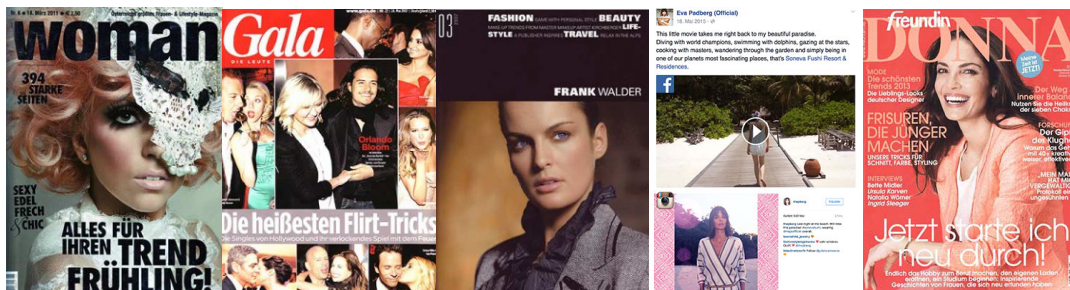
Source: Website Schaffelhuber Communications (2019)



Source: Website Schaffelhuber Communications (2019)



Source: Website Schaffelhuber Communications (2019)



Source: Website Schaffelhuber Communications (2019)

2.1.4 Analysis of the Environment

For the environmental scanning PESTLE analysis is being used that describes the Macro environment of Schaffelhuber Communications. After the PESTLE analysis the competitors of the company are being determined and scanned to a certain degree. Followed by a SWOT analysis and the Ansoff Matrix. All those tools are should help understanding better the situation of the company.

2.1.4.1 MACRO/PESTLE Analysis

As one of the most used models for business evaluation, PESTLE analyses the external environment and hence is a tool for the situational analysis of a company (Gupta, 2013).

The objective is to analyze Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors in order to increase success. Through that examination the idea phase, product development, product launching, content marketing strategies and other factors can be improved. It also involves providing a deeper understanding of businesses, being cost effective, method to exploit opportunities and alertness to threats (Frue, 2016). The following paragraphs will show a PESTEL analysis, concentrating on the German market in the luxury hotel business in connection with other countries that could have an influence on it.

Political: Uncertainty about the Brexit may affect the Business as well as the effects of Brexit. As Schaffelhuber Communications have strategic alliances with PR-Agencies also from the UK, Brexit could affect the company and would be hurting revenues (notesmatic.com, 2017).
Political development in Europe, the US and conflicts in the Middle East could as well have an impact on the strategic alliances and some clients.
Another political factor could be the danger of terrorism in the destinations of the company's portfolio as well as international relations and the political climate in those destinations. A military conflict in those countries is one of the biggest threats looking at the political climate (Swot & Pestle.com, 2018). Changing government regimes could be a problem for the hotel industry too (notesmatic.com, 2017).

Economical: Every year there is more tourism supply around the world, so companies need to make themselves even more visible than ever. As competition is rising a demand in help for the right PR strategy is growing. In order to gain more visibility and effectively use money there was an increase of investment for social media. The budget for traditional marketing has decreased as social media marketing is cheaper and the reach often higher. This made marketers change their strategies and engage much more with their audience. Which again is a challenge as for example influencers have the power to create the advertisement in their own language and

style (Ukessays, 2016). In general German economy had a modest start in 2019, as the PR agency of Schaffelhuber Communications is focusing on the German market this might be not the best circumstances. However, the positive trends on the labor market are continuing. According to bmwi.de (2019) the unemployment rate remains unchanged at 5.3%. But with its population of 81 million people and with the highest GDP in Europe it is still the largest consumer market in Europe (pmg.com, 2018).

Social: Social media is a constantly changing environment. It is a challenge to analyze its development and its trends with that speed of growth. It also depends very much on the consumer preferences (P.E.S.T. Analysis for social media marketing, 2016). Hence the future of influencer marketing is unsure and due to its fast changing environment, it is hard to analyze. So PR agencies will have to adapt fast to the changes of the huge social media and influencer marketing. However, influencer marketing is a marketing type that is still getting more and more interesting to companies and some research show that brands are further (at least for the next three years) planning to work with influencers (Haapasalmi, 2017). So the challenge is to find the right influencers for the right purposes and feeling the market's needs (Schaffer, 2019). Other factors are social differences in emerging and developing countries and the fact that international PR Agencies work different compared to German PR Agencies as they have greater demand in travel agencies than the rest of the world (Schaffelhuber Communications). Looking at the German market, it can be said that they are rather price sensitive and hence not always loyal to brands (pmg.com, 2018) This could cause a negative impact to Schaffelhuber Communications as they are largely promoting luxury hotels and famous brands. Considering the holiday habits of the German market we can find a tendency to plan it early and carefully (deutschland.de, 2017). Here a lot of research comes in place and the work of PR agencies can be useful. The number of people that are planning to travel internationally is growing. Their favorite destinations are apparently where sun, sea and beach comes together (Deutschland.de, 2017). This is also an advantage for Schaffelhuber as many of their destinations include these factors.

Technological: Technology is changing every sector and so does it change the PR and tourism sector. New ways of promoting arise and social media is playing a bigger role than ever. Also,

Hotels have to adapt as certain technology types have become standards in hotels. If one wants to be innovative the word technology is often not far away. Anyhow, every industry needs to adapt and so does the PR and tourism industry. A negative technological factor for the industry could represent online rental services such as Airbnb. For example, Marriott is also slowly implementing luxury Airbnb apartments which might compete with the target group of Schaffelhuber Communications (Wynne R., 2018). One of the most difficult problems to solve in the PR industry is to measure the value that PR agencies bring for their customers. A startup called TrendKite is focusing on exactly this problem and helps measuring impacts on PR campaigns. To evolve these kind of technologies might be of interest in that section (Hall, J. 2017). Velasco, M. (2018) who is in the chair of Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communications Management announced as one of the topics that should be considered in future PR is the “micro-video-boom”. He refers to the social network “Wechat” that has more than 1.000 million users in Asia and is packed with short videos. Also Facebook and Instagram are more and more focusing on videos. Velasco says this has a neuroscientific explanation, as videos can be processed much easier by people than a text. Hence PR Agencies should focus more on videos in order to tell their stories.

Legal: It is crucial to perfectly understand every legal situation of every destination the company is promoting as not all destinations have such solid legal structures as Germany does. For example Schaffelhuber Communications has recently entered the Indian market with the Oberoi hotel group. Certainly the legal factors in India are different and need to be checked precisely before making this deal (Schaffelhuber Communications, 2019).

The world of social media marketing is growing fast and more and more people are involved. More regulations must be done in order to protect consumers and companies (P.E.S.T. Analysis for social media marketing, 2016). Especially in the PR industry copyright is a very important topic. It is crucial that PR agencies at copyright to every single photo, song or video they are adding to their texts. This law must be followed and constantly checked for changes (Mc Allister-Holland, D., 2012).

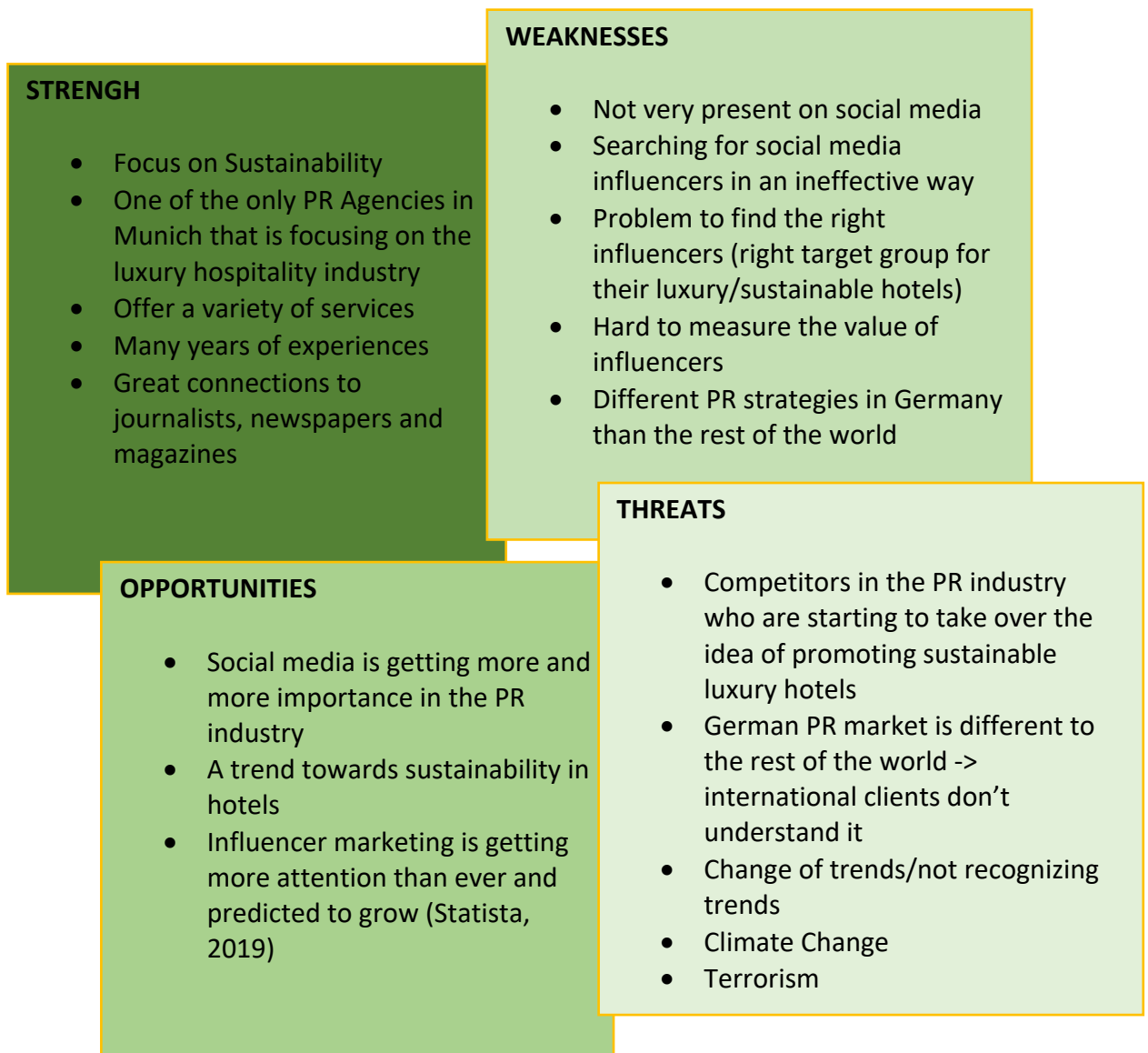
Environmental: Climate Change is in general changing destinations and might affect the tourism demand for some destinations. Especially Schaffelhuber's destinations in the south. It also could harm destinations by raising ocean levels and flooding resorts. Some of Schaffelhuber's clients are very close to the sea or even islands, this could be a problem for them (Schaffelhuber Communications, 2019) Many tourism destinations are also facing the problem of pollution. Air, water and soil require millions of years to recover. Working on sustainable destinations is an opportunity to enhance the way of doing tourism in order to protect our world. An environmental potential threat could be the sudden rise of fuel prices; this would reduce the demand of travels and hotel rooms (Rinkesh, 2019). In general people are becoming very informed and highly sensitive on environmental issues according to Kuckartz (2013). This is a positive development for Schaffelhuber as they promote sustainable hotels and resorts. However, many destinations are quite far away and transports like Airplanes must be taken in order to reach the resorts. This again remains a problem for a highly sensitive audience (Kuckartz, U., 2013).

All in one there are many factors that influence or could influence the company Schaffelhuber Communications. Regarding politics the most up to date danger might be the effects of the Brexit that could influence the strategic alliances of the company. Regarding economic factors, Germany had a modest start in 2019, however, it is still one of the largest consumer markets in Europe. The wish to save money might be a benefit for social media marketing as the expenses are lower in this sector. Social factors are the holiday habits when it comes price sensitivity, the carefully planning in advance and the growing interest in travelling internationally. Social media is playing a bigger role than ever although its future trend is hard to measure. Looking at the technological world we see it changing rapidly, whether it's in the PR industry with tools that help to measure the value of PR work and videos in combination of social media that are becoming increasingly relevant or it's the Hotel industry where certain technological tools are becoming standard and Airbnb turns the market up side down. Concerning the legal factors of course the differences between markets must be considered, even in a space without visible borders like social media legal factors are vital. Environmental problems are concerning the Germans more than ever and influencing their decisions of travelling, which in general is a positive development.

2.1.4.2. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis a powerful tool to understand a company’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as identifying opportunities and threats. With it’s easy and clear structure a company can manage with a little thought to uncover opportunities and by facing the weaknesses to manage eliminating the threats, that would otherwise catch a company that is not aware of it (SWOT Analysys, n.d.).When using the SWOT framework to look at the competitors, a new strategy can get developed that will lead the business to a unique selling proposition (Dyson R., 2004)

Figure 2: SWOT Analysis



Source: SWOT Analysis, Own Source (2019)

Looking at the SWOT analysis of Schaffelhuber Communications we can find a great strength which is the focus on sustainability in hospitality, this is a quite unique field not many PR agencies focus on. They also offer all-round services for their clients, even exceeding only PR work and including marketing, photography and much more. Thanks to their years of experience, they also have a great understanding of the market and very good connections to journalists, renowned newspapers and magazines, which are part of their strengths.

One of their weaknesses might be that they are not as present on social media as some of their competitors. As this PR Agency is working together with social media influencers, they have to keep up to date. The way they are searching for influencers is not very effective, also the way they choose them is involving a lot of risk. They didn't find a real technique that makes the process of choosing easier. Finally, to measure the value of an influencer is a very difficult task as it is always a vague measurement. Another weakness in a global perspective could be that through the difference of the German PR market, international clients might have difficulties to understand the system.

This point is also a threat, as it could prevent clients from working with the company. Other threats are of course the competitors, as this market in general is a very competitive one. At the moment, there is a trend for sustainability which is, like mentioned before, a specialty of the company. However, if for example this trend goes back it could become a threat for Schaffelhuber Communications. Also, the trend of influencer marketing. It is hard to measure into which direction it will go. Realizing the trends too late could bring the company a competitive disadvantage. Factors like climate change and terrorism are threads of almost every touristic destination and would also affect Schaffelhuber Communications.

However, threads could become opportunities and realizing trends in advance is a huge opportunity. Social media is getting more and more importance in the PR industry. Creating more visibility thru their social media accounts would be an opportunity to get more clients. Working in a different way as a German PR company could also be an opportunity to gain more clients of the German market or even could be attractive for international clients as they would not be able to handle it by themselves. The trend towards sustainability in hotels is a great opportunity to expand their business

into that direction. Also, the growth of influencer marketing could be an opportunity to expand that section and find new ways of handling it.

2.1.4.3. Competitors

It is important to know your competitors in order to know where your business is positioned.

According to Day and Wensley (1988) competitive analysis accounts to the key success factors. To figure out the strengths and weaknesses of the competitors within your market is the purpose of the competitive analysis. This must be determined in order to make clear what the companies distinct advantage is and to find out how to prevent competitors to enter your market (entrepreneur.com, 2006). According to Faullant, Matzler and Füller (2008) it is crucial to visualize a competitors position in order to elaborate reasonable and success-promising options.

In order to find the right competitors for Schaffelhuber Communications it has to be clarified that the company is a PR agency for luxury hotels all over the world who want to be communicated in the German speaking countries (Germany, Austria and Switzerland).

Competitors in Munich

Starting with the local competitors we focus on Munich. According to Bonow (2016) Munich is a major media city and this is also why there is a large range of competitors for PR-Agencies. However, only few work in the luxury tourism industry. One of the main competitors might be Waldburg PR which is one of the only ones working in almost exactly the same field. Waldburg PR is also a small company and focusing on the luxury hospitality sector. A main difference might be that their focus is not that much on sustainability as Schaffelhuber Communications and that a part of their services is also about crisis communication. Waldburg PR doesn't only focus on luxury tourism but also on other luxury goods like watches and jewelry (Waldburg PR, n.d.). The Influencer marketing is a topic on their website and they are doing it for some hotels but not very actively. Mentionable is also that Waldburg PR has very active Facebook, Instagram (1.656 Follower) and Twitter accounts compared to Schaffelhuber Communications, where they mostly use Facebook as a social media communication tool and that not even very frequently. However, they are trying to improve their social media visibility, especially on Instagram (180 Follower).

Another competitor in the luxury hotel segment in Munich is Starling (Starling-PR, n.d.). This company though is way smaller as they only have three employees and a portfolio of ten hotels/resorts. They call themselves a boutique PR Agency. Segara is another competitor who does PR for Hotels, although they have an orientation towards luxury, they don't focus that much on Luxury as Hotels as Schaffelhuber Communications (Segara, n.d.). Same counts for Stromberger PR, they have a focus on Hotel, however luxury isn't the center of their attention. Their social media presence is quite good, they have 1.391 Follower on Instagram (Stromberger PR, n.d.). The PR Agency Uschi Liebl counts also to one of the direct competitors as they have a great number of good Hotels in their portfolio. However, they don't focus at Sustainability. Apart from that their social media presence is just fine, they have 1000 Followers on Instagram and they have some great contacts for influencer marketing (Uschi Liebl PR, n.d.). Apart from those competitors in Munich all other PR agencies do not exactly refer to the luxury hospitality sector. They either refer to luxury lifestyle, beauty, fashion or goods (Agentur Stadtgespräch; Starling PR etc.)

Competitors in Germany

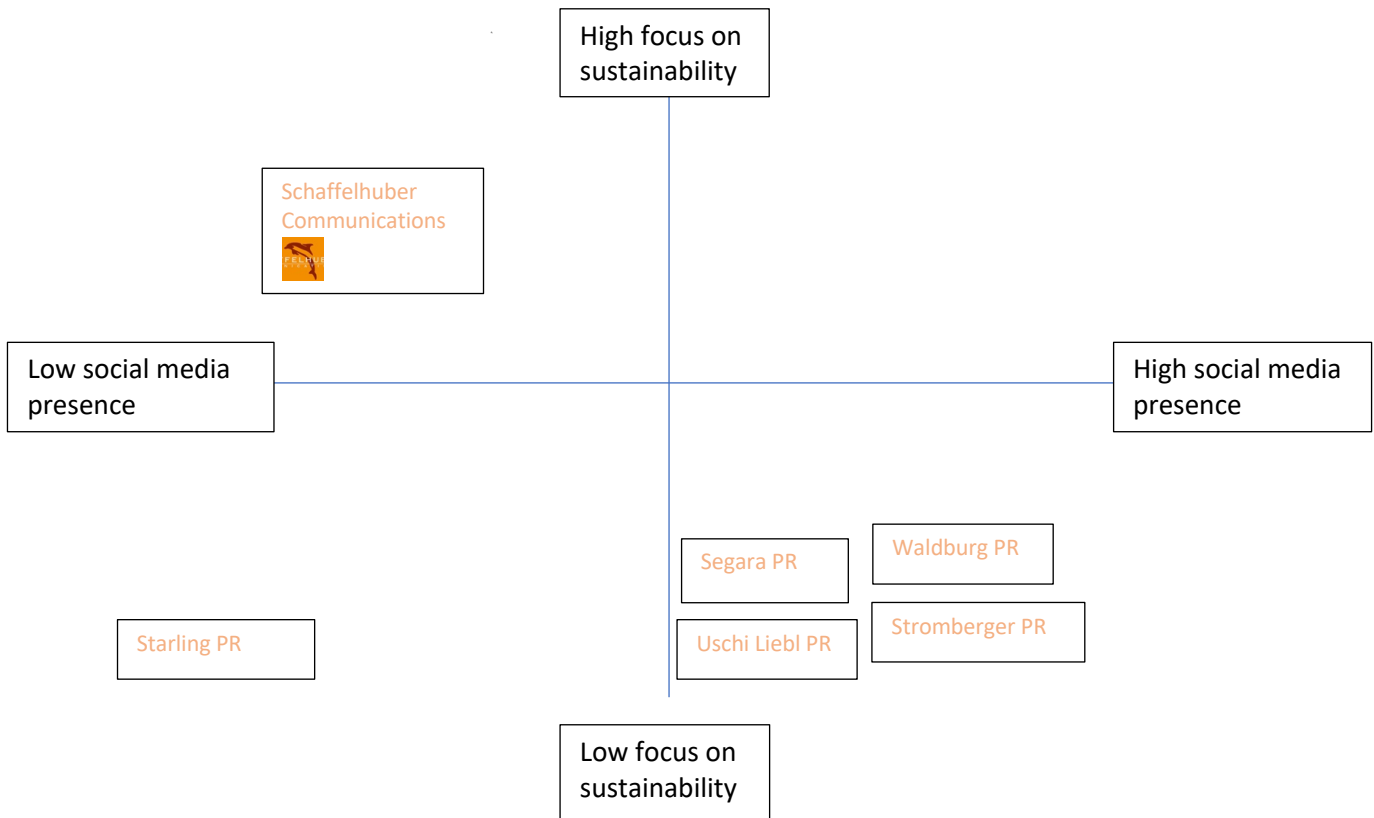
Looking at German wide competitors we can find the big PR Agencies. KPRN for example is one of the leading German PR agencies, they don't only focus on hotels but also airlines, destinations and cruises. They are very connected to many social media channels. On their website they have links to Facebook, twitter, Pinterest, Xing, Instagram and more. However, for example on Instagram they still only have 622 followers. Still, they do have a focus on influencer marketing and see it as an important tool for storytelling. KPRN even takes care of the maintenance and creation of social media channels, community management and content. They have an extensive network of bloggers and influencers for their cooperation's (KPRN, n.d.). Another big one is Aviareps, focusing on hotels, destinations, airlines, cars, even airports and much more. Interestingly Aviareps is only present on facebook, linked-in and facebook. Instagram doesn't seem to be a topic for them, also influencer marketing seems not to be one of their services (Aviareps, n.d.). Wilde und Partner is also one of the big players. They are also located in Munich and like all others mentioned above doing PR for the DACH market. They focus on luxury lifestyle, brand communication and consumer communication (Wilde und Partner, n.d.). However, one of the biggest German competitors might be Lobster Experience, which was founded in 2007. Lobster Experience is one of the biggest Luxury focused PR agencies in Germany that present the German speaking market. They have a large number of

prestige customers from all over the world with a database of over 20.000 contacts. They also have a lot of followers (1.665) on Instagram and seem to try making an authentic and personal account. A special feature that they offer is to produce podcasts for their clients and they also do a lot of Influencer Marketing (lobster-experiences.com). Interestingly none of those agencies focuses on sustainability which seems to be a niche in the PR sector.

International Competitors

Schaffelhuber Communications does PR for international companies who want to promote their company in the DACH (Germany, Austria, Switzerland) market. Hence, there are not a lot of international PR Companies in the sustainable luxury hotel segment who focus on PR in the German speaking market. However, there are a few who can be seen as international competitors. For example the ITCN (International Tourism Communication Network). This Company does PR in the tourism sector for the whole world. Nevertheless, they don't focus on luxury but more on destinations and some big hotel groups. They also do some big social media campaigns with influencers (itcnworld.com, n.d.). Another international competitor is Elite Hotel Marketing. A company based in New York who not only does PR but also Marketing for luxury hotels. They have alliances for the German, Austrian and Swiss Market and hence are competitors of Schaffelhuber Communications. Elite Hotel Marketing was founded in 1992 and still remains within the family which shows this company has a lot of experience. However, a difference to Schaffelhuber Communications is that they don't focus on sustainability (Elite, n.d.). 5W Public Relations is another international PR company to mention. Also based in NYC and founded in 2003 5W Public Relations has a wide range of clients and offer many different services. Their practice area is not only in travel and hospitality but also in beauty, technology, health and wellness and many more sectors. Anyhow, they do PR for some luxury hotels but again without a focus in sustainability, also, they don't only focus on the DACH market but on all markets internationally. Concerning Influencer Marketing they have a good strategy behind it and offer to their clients strategic celebrity partnerships, talent procurement and recruitment, influencer marketing agency initiatives, celebrity brand loyalty programs and much more (5wpr, n.d.).

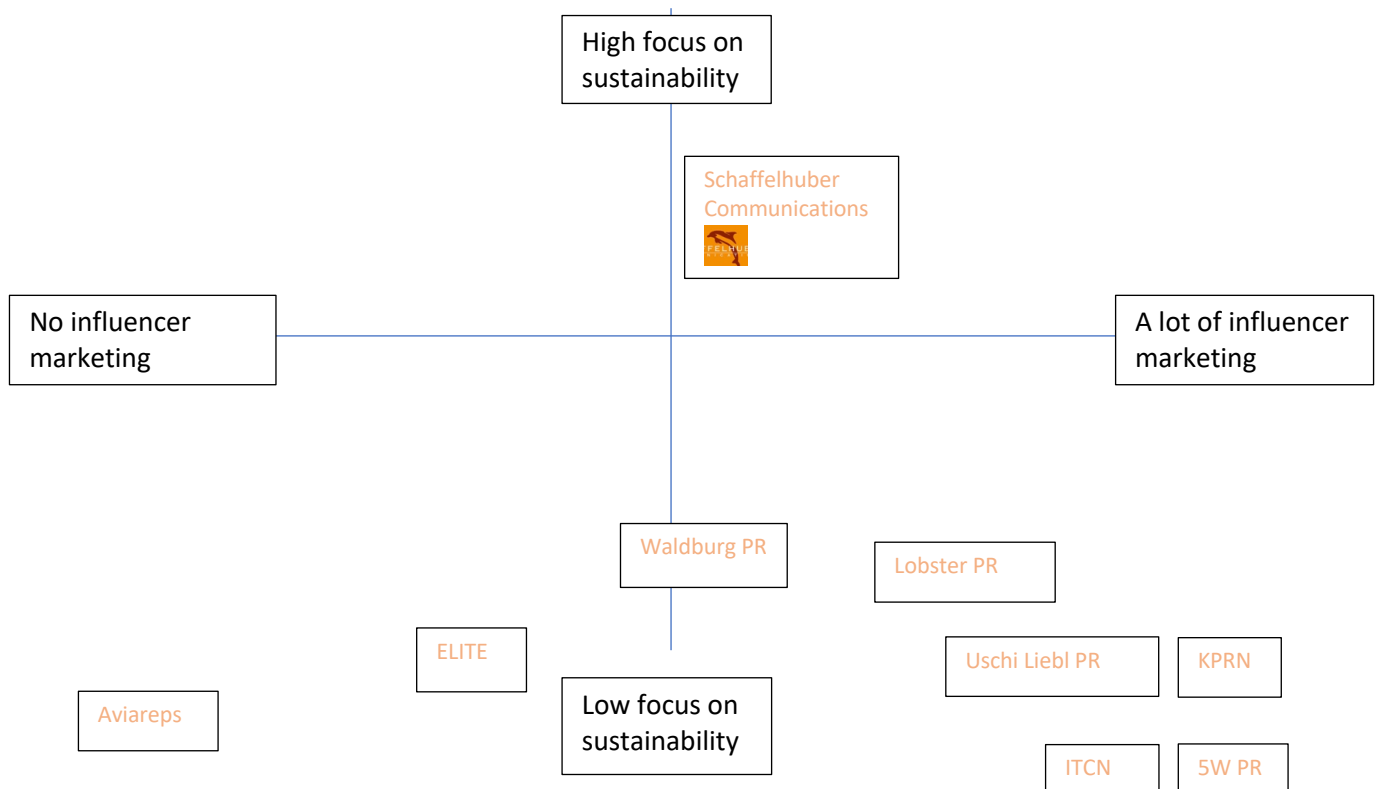
Figure 3: Positioning Map PR Agencies in the Luxury Tourism Sector (Munich)



Source: Positioning Map, Own Source (2019)

Looking at the graph we can see that Schaffelhuber Communications is the clear expert in Sustainability. Anyhow, their social media presence lies far behind most of the other direct competitors. Waldburg PR seems to be the leader in social media presence and is closest to Schaffelhuber Communications when it comes to sustainability. The three others (Segara Pr, Uschi Liebl Pr and Stromberger PR) don't really focus on sustainability at all and they are at quite the same level of social media presence. Starling PR is way too small and not focusing either on sustainability nor on their social media presence yet.

Figure 4: Positioning Map PR Agencies in the Luxury Tourism Sector (Munich, Germany & International)



Source: Positioning Map, Own Source (2019)

This Graph shows again that Schaffelhuber Communications is the leader in sustainability and relatively well positioned for doing influencer marketing. Concerning sustainability all other companies are on the lower half with Waldburg PR and Lobster PR at almost equal high positions. Most of Schaffelhuber's competitors offer a lot of influencers marketing to their clients. Especially KPRN and 5W PR focus very much on this sector, closely followed by Uschi Liebl PR, ITCN, and Lobster PR. Waldburg PR is in located quite in the middle which can be explained that they offer it to their clients but don't put it that much in action. ELITE hardly mentions it on their website and Aviareps doesn't seem to work with influencer marketing at all.

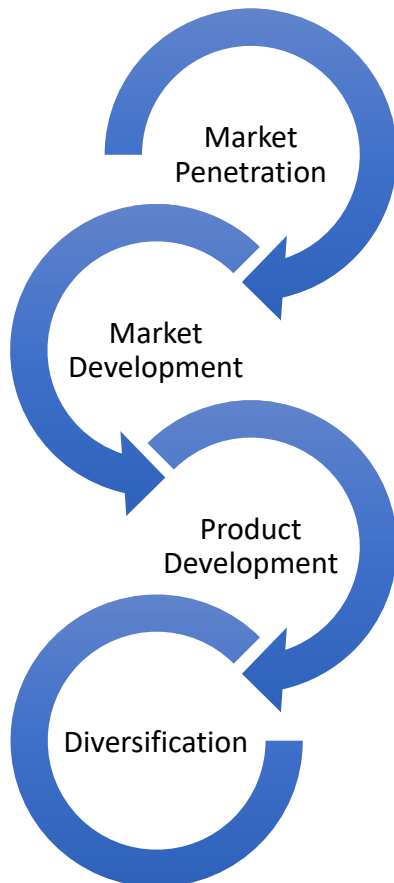
2.1.4.4. Ansoff Matrix

The Ansoff Matrix presents growth through market and product extension possibilities. It is important for a conscious evaluation of a firm and decision making (Hussain et al., 2013).

There are four areas of growth: Market Penetration, Market Development, Product Development and Diversification. It is designed to help marketers and managers to develop strategies of growth. Each strategy brings different levels of risk with it but is a great opportunity for a company. At the market Penetration the company wants to grow using its existing products and services in an existing market. At the Market Development a company uses its existing products (or services) but wants to enter a new market. When using the strategy of Product Development a company stays in the existing market but tries to develop new offers (products or services). The strategy of Diversification introduces new products and services in new markets a company tries to grow its market share (smartdraw.com

, n.d.). The following figure shows the four stages of the Ansoff Matrix for Schaffelhuber Communications.

Figure 5: Ansoff Matrix



- Schaffelhuber Communication started in 2006 with Market Penetration. They entered into an existing PR market in Munich with luxury hospitality products. The company wanted to increase share in the existing market and expanded by slowly adding more and more clients of the luxury hospitality business into their portfolio.
- Slowly they started to expand into different kind of markets for example in Africa, Russia and Benelux. They also gained new strategic alliances with companies in Asia, USA, UK and UAE.
- After some time, they focused more and more on sustainable destinations and companies. So, their product line developed into a sustainable portfolio.
- At the moment, the company is

focusing on a very special market and is good in what they are doing. They even have space to expand in this field. However, a next step could be diversification where they could introduce some totally new products into new markets. And idea would be to start promoting virtual reality tours for guests who first want to have a virtual tour through the luxury resorts before really booking it. Special virtual reality glasses would be needed that could be sold to travel agencies also outside the DACH region.





























2.1.4.5. VRIO – Analysis

The VRIO Analysis explores if and how a firm and its resources is able to expand over time and contributes to a better perception of how competitive advantage is obtained and maintained (Cardeal and Antonia, 2012). It is a way to analyze a company's advantage by looking at its resources. By knowing the recourses, a firm can better understand their weakness or competitive advantage. While PESTLE uses the Macro Analysis, VRIO uses the Micro Analysis, which is why they are perfect complements.

For this analysis four aspects are being taken into account. The first one is if a company has valuable resources. The main question here is whether it is difficult to obtain a recourse on the market and how expensive it is. The second aspect explains if a recourse is rare, which means how limited the recourse on the market is. Another aspect deals with the Inimitability, it refers to how difficult it is to copy a recourse. And the last issue concerns the organization. It determines whether an organization can use the recourses properly and whether the existing arrangements are supporting the recourse (Culture to Capitalize, organized Management Systems, Structures...) (VRIO Analysis, n.d.).

The following analysis concerns the company Schaffelhuber Communications.

Figure 6: VRIO Analysis

Recourse/Capability	V	R	I	O
PR in luxury hospitality				
Long term relations with partners				
Highly motivated team				
Sustainable destinations and hotels				
Sustainable PR agency				
Years of experience in the sector				
Reputation				
Trust				
Propensity for Innovation				
Influencer Marketing				

Source: VRIO Analysis, Own Source (2019)

Valuable

Schaffelhuber Communications is a valuable company as it is one of the only PR Agencies in Munich working in the field of luxury hospitality and communicating the topic of sustainability. This gives the brand a unique position in a city that is said to be a hub for PR Agencies. The team that is highly motivated and willing to give the most for each client is also something that cannot be found everywhere and is very valuable. The good long term relations with all kind of partners is one of the most valuable attributes the company can submit as well as the trust of their clients and the great reputation. Finally, as influencer marketing is growing in importance it is valuable to incorporate it into the company.

Rare

What makes the company rare is not the fact that they are a PR Agency for luxury hospitality but the fact that they have great sustainable destinations and hotels in their portfolio. Also, they are already known for being a sustainable PR Agency, which is still something not that common and rather rare in Germany.

Costly to Imitate

Imitating this Business Model is possible but for sure costly. First of all, looking just at the relations and partners Anke Schaffelhuber has made over the years, is something that is hard to measure in money. The years of experience can also not be imitated and the reputation the company has gotten during this time. Every company that is working in sustainable field, whether direct or not, needs to be trusted by its clients in order to gain long term customers. All this factors are costly and hard to imitate.

Organized to Capture Value

As the company has been on the market since 2006 and is gaining new clients every year the organization has to work well and represent an advantage. Management tools work for the company. They use tools like “Landau Media” and “Press Relations” that help them to work in this field way easier or even possible. However, more innovative administrative tools could be useful in order to use hours more effectively. The company would have the infrastructure to handle Influencer marketing in a different dimension. At the moment they look for each influencer personally on Instagram or at events. Via special tools a more effective way of research would be possible and make the influencer marketing way more efficient.

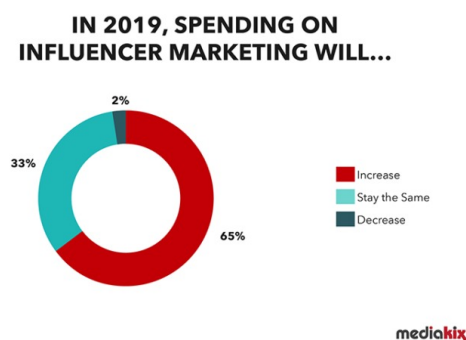
In total, it can be said that there is one special recourse of Schaffelhuber Communications that fulfills the needs of the VRIO analysis through fulfilling the four aspects. It is valuable, rare, costly to imitate and organized to capture value. This recourse is the fact that they are a sustainable PR agency. Schaffelhuber Communications is a leader in that sector as hardly any other PR agency in the DACH region considers sustainability. Especially in the combination of luxury hotels this is something very rare. As nowadays there is a huge trend towards sustainability this resource seems to be very valuable. In order to imitate it a lot of effort must be taken. A key instrument in this sector are the

connections the company has built to its clients and the hotel industry in general. To imitate that will take many years and depends a lot on the skills of communication and connecting with people. Lastly the company does have the infrastructure to handle it and is doing this very well.

3. DESCRIPITON OF THE PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Influencer Marketing is a type of marketing where an influential person is engaged to share brand messaging with their audience in form of sponsored content. Similar to celebrity marketing, advertisers use influencer marketing to make consumers trust the brand more or because consumers aspire to be like the influencer. The understanding of a celebrity has changed, next to movie stars, musicians and pro athletes, celebrities of the social media world exist now too (Sammis, Lincoln and Pomponi, 2015). As Influencer Marketing is continuing to grow more and more firms are adapting this strategy. Many studies show that the trend of influencer marketing is continuing to grow. Bailis R. (2019) who works for Mediakix, an influencer marketing agency that conducts leading research about the incredibly fast evolving influencer marketing industry, presented some statistics in an article. One statistic shows that the budget for influencer marketing will increase by 1.65% in 2019.

Figure 7: 2019 Spending on Influencer Marketing

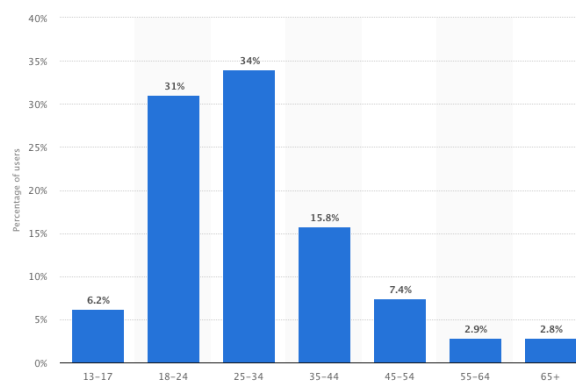


Source: mediakix.com (2019)

After brainstorming with employees and directors of Schaffelhuber Communications some problems concerning influencer marketing were detected. First of all, the struggle of finding the right influencer for Luxury hotels. Nowadays, there are so many influencers out there that companies face

difficulties in finding the right ones for their business. Especially for luxury hotels the target group is difficult to align with most of the influencers. According to “The State of Influencer Marketing, 2019” the most important channel for Influencer Marketing is Instagram, their studies show that it is considered as one of the most important tools for Influencer marketing campaigns, apparently 79% of respondents think so. This is why Instagram will be the platform used for this study. Luxury hotels want to work with influencers as they see the benefit of it, however it is very difficult to detect the right influencers for them, as platforms like Instagram are still used by a relatively young audience. Corresponding to the data of Statista (2019) the majority of users is between 25 and 35.

Figure 8: Distribution of Instagram users worldwide as of July 2019, by age group



Source: Statista (2019)

Obviously this age group is not the major target group for luxury hotels as income often doesn't allow such holidays at that age. But the fact that in 2018 Instagram had 1 Billion users, leaves in the age group of 34-44 still 131 million and in the group of 45-54 years 68 million users (Worthy P., 2018). However, these users must be addressed and this is one of the goals of this study. To find the right influencers for the right target group of luxury hotels.

On the other hand Luxury hotels must try to be attractive places in order to attract the influencers and convince them to tell their stories. Until now only few tactics exist and with this study we will try to find out the most effective way that makes sense for hoteliers to lure the right influencers to their properties. For this reason influencers will be interviewed in order to get their point of view and hear what they find attractive about hotels. At the same time hotel/marketing managers will be

interviewed in order to find out their opinions. At the end of the study a goal is to make good recommendations to both sides and give ideas how they can enhance their practices.

Other ongoing problems for influencer marketing is how to check their reliability as well as measuring their value. Some studies already picked up these topics but it seems one of the most difficult problems to solve. Anyhow, these problems will be part of this study, especially focusing the side of the luxury hospitality sector.

Last but not least this paper addresses the issue of sustainability. Sustainability can bring influencer marketing to another level by making it a meaningful tool that changes the world in a better way. Perhaps influencer marketing could be used to enhance sustainable values. It could be the future of influencer marketing and it will be interesting to hear expert opinions about this topic and other future trends of influencer marketing. From this the research question of this study and the objectives are:

How to enhance the use of Influencer Marketing for luxury hotels & PR companies?

- 1) To interview hotel/marketing managers of sustainable luxury hotels and influencers in order to get their point of view*
- 2) To identify strategies of how to find the right influencers for luxury hotels*
- 3) To determine strategies of how to check reliability*
- 4) To explore how to measure the value of an influencer*
- 5) To analyze strategies to make hotels attractive places for influencers*
- 6) To analyze how to use influencer marketing to enhance sustainable values*

4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon it is important to investigate in prior literature. According to Hart (1998) it is crucial to know what has already been written about certain topics in order to better analyze the actual situation.

4.1 Influencer Marketing

In order to get the most return on investment, the advertising industry is always looking for the most efficient approaches. As social media is gaining influence in advertising, agencies concentrate more and more on that direction (Adweek.com, 2015). Social media indicates an assemble of Internet-based applications that make the creation and exchange of user-generated content possible (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Each Year advertisers are allocating more money for social media advertisement, this is a sign that they are noticing better return on investments in that sector (Emarketer.com, 2015). Already in 2016 it was estimated that digital advertising expenditures (including social) will exceed that of television in 2017 for the first time (Emarketer.com, 2016).

Influencer Marketing is taking place on social media. In general social media is an engine generating content. This content is created by millions of people and spread all around the world. Obviously such an instrument is interesting and inspiring for marketers to create value (Berthon et al., 2012). According to Crittenden, Hanna and Rohm (2011) the fact that everybody joining the ecosystem is connected to each other, is the true power of social media. Chen and Hung (2010) found that knowledge sharing in general is important for a healthy community, they even depend on it. In general a presence across various social media channels also increases the probability of transforming online searches into actual bookings (Torres, 2010).

In the recent years influencer marketing has been one of the most popular forms of social media marketing. Influencer marketing is a type of marketing where the target group are distinct individuals, rather than a whole market (Adweek.com, 2015). In a way Influencer marketing can be understood as a modern form of celebrity endorsement (Ewers, 2017) or virtual word of mouth (Whitler 2014). BVDW (2017) states that influencer marketing is a form of online marketing in which companies advertise with the help of influencers via their social media channels. Usually influencer marketing aims sales, the awareness of a brand/product or the improvement of the image of a

brand. Compared to other forms of classic marketing, a cooperative research study found that influencer advertising has the ability to bring about 11 times more return on investment (Rusu, 2016). The Return on Investment for influencer marketing is calculated by the reach, engagement rate, and sales (Swant, 2016).

A recent study from Hilker consulting (2019) suggests that influencer marketing is becoming more and more important. Consumers who inform themselves about new products often ask network contacts on Facebook or Twitter. The more people are connected with each other via social media, the more success is guaranteed. Therefore, the relevance of influencer marketing for companies has increased considerably. According to a study from BVDW (2019) Almost every second person (43%) claims to have bought a product through influencer advertising. In 2017, the figure was still 16 percent. So the influence is growing rapidly. What is striking, however, is the sensitivity of the users when it comes to advertising on social media. 40 percent of the respondents said that advertising must be labelled as such, otherwise it would disturb considerably and have a deterrent effect.

There are numerous brands who already promote their products through bloggers who write blog posts or artists who recommend certain brands or products on social media. Mostly they connect these posts with experiences they face every day or in general in their life (Freberg, 2012). However on the other side, influencers can also have a negative impact on organizations. Influencers are sometimes auditing the real situation as they want to stay authentic and in that sense it is possible that they point out negative experiences or bad results or in the worst case by sending wrong information (Jahnke and Kroll, 2018). Pang et al. (2016) suggest that creating a good and strong relationship with Influencers can be helpful for companies to enhance positive media coverage and like this assure stronger public appearance. Accordingly, companies should always engage proactively when working together with influencers by expressing their ideas and wishes for social media campaigns (Agostino et al., 2019).

4.2 The Influencer

Thanks to the power of the internet and new technologies that join people who share similar interests, many users, the so called influencers, attain a large share of voice in the market

(Booth & Matic, 2011). According to Tuten & Solomon (2013) influencers are opinion leaders whose advices are being taken seriously. They have the power to influence consumers attitudes, behaviors and opinions. Tuten and Solomon's opinion is that anyone investing energy and time within social media communities can become an influencer just by submitting systematically and regularly high-quality content. Brown & Fiorella (2013) state that for businesses an influencer is typically not a consumer and incentivized by companies to create and propose content concerning a certain product, brand or business.

Ríos et al. (2019) explained that the influencer itself in a social network is someone having a larger effect than an ordinary user. He also states that in order to have a "healthy" social network, influencers are key members. Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influencers display a certain composition of desirable characteristics that give them the chance to influence a disproportionately wide range of other people . These could be on the one side personal characteristics (like enthusiasm, credibility or expertise) or on the other side networking characteristics (like centrality or connectivity).

By raising as much attention as possible and creating an authentic personal "brand" through social networks the Influencer tries to reach a status of a "celebrity". An Influencer is like a celebrity produced, not born (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). Schwabel (2011) for example explained that individuals have become powerful players in an rising online reputation economy just by expressing themselves. This reputation caused by social media members works as a new type of currency or in general gained value. However, Geppert (2016) realized a main difference between influencers and celebrities. He suggests that influencers are more seen and trusted as experts in the field, whereas celebrity marketing is using the celebrity's reputation and fame to sell products. Both are influencing the target group but the way the influence is triggered is different.

Companies are communicating their message through social media influencers, who are being trusted by their followers almost as much as a friend (Swant 2016). In order to clarify the term 'follower': a so called follower is someone who follows a person's activity on social media because they admire or that person (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016). Ethical wise this "friendship" which is based on the trust in a certain influencer could be abused. For example if the influencer includes positive posts of products because he/she gets payed for it, but actually does not use or believe in the product. Obviously this would be abusing the followers trust and basically would be lying to the

consumers (Woods, 2016). However, in 2015 the Federal Trade Commission declared a list of approval guidelines for this type of marketing. They include guidelines where for example Influencers have to communicate properly that an advertisement is being shown, if not the influencer could lose trustworthiness and marketers could get in trouble (Rodríguez, 2015).

Considering the indications of Instagram a Study was done by Evans et al. (2017) that showed that it could have a negative impact on behavioral intention of customers to disclose advertising. According to Ewers (2017), sponsorship disclosure can have a positive effect. While it helps followers to identify paid campaigns, on the other hand it serves to effectively advertise a product, as it is more visible where it comes from. However in order to really identify consumer responses Ewers split Influencers in two groups: the celebrity and the micro-celebrity. Celebrities are people who were already famous and have an influence on social media, whereas micro-celebrities are famous thanks to their social media activities and simply have a great reach on Instagram. She found that a higher purchase intention is triggered by celebrities than micro-celebrities. After all the synergy of type of influencer and sponsorship disclosure affected the brand attitude and credibility.

4.3 Finding Influencers

Brands recently have recognized the viral growth and far-reaching impact of working with influences in order to promote their product (De Veirman et al., n.d.). If brands want to adapt to this type of word of mouth-marketing, they face a major challenge. The challenge is to identify and select the right influencer for the company, whom has a strong impact on their target group and to get the influencer to include their products in their posts (Wong, 2014).

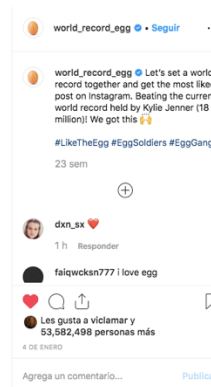
Nowadays many businesses start searching on social media for influencers, especially for small businesses it is very interesting as it is less expensive and less time consuming as traditional marketing campaigns (Benwell, 2014). A true advantage is also the possibility of tracking consumers behavior, which again could lead to finding new marketing strategies (Tuten, 2008). Also, like mentioned before, social media can help to improve brand image and hence gives the companies more credibility. However, the most valuable benefit is the creation of an exchange bridge between the customers and the brands. Usually this benefits can be observed through the sales figures (Wally & Koshy, 2014). So how can these influencers be found?

Typically influencer agencies help hotels, PR- or advertising agencies with the process of finding the right influencer. By representing the influencer, those agencies help him/her with contract agreements and finding them valuable opportunities to gain money (Woods, 2016). However, in order to find the right influencers companies must first have a clear idea of the target group they want to reach. Products and services should be in line with the influencers profile and style (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Influencers don't have to have a huge visibility, if they are seen in exactly the niche that the company is aiming to reach, they can be the perfect fit for that brand (Gillin, 2007). Like mentioned before, in order to identify the right influencers obviously the target market of the company must be clearly defined. If that is the case, as an alternative method of identifying influencers, companies can ask decision makers who they admire and hence get an understanding of what the community is looking for (Brown & Hayes, 2008).

For identifying Influencers some brands use the Fisherman's Influence Model. For this concept firms apply the rule of "casting a wide net to catch the most fish", which suggests approaching those influencers with the largest follower base and reach that will boost the greatest brand awareness and hence eventually results in a purchase (Brown & Fiorella, 2013). Booth and Matic (2011) developed a customizable evaluation algorithms that help to find identify bloggers. This algorithm provides a score, the so called 'influencer index', that shows a company how valuable an influencer could be for that firm. Anyhow, the issue with this approach is that users are chosen manually and scored based on certain criteria (e.g., views per month, posts per month etc.). Like this automatic learning techniques are used in order to facilitate or approve the brand-blogger matchmaking over time (Sweet, Rothwell & Luo, 2019).

Instagram has become the most used platform for influencer marketing (Veissi, 2017). Instagram is a photo- and video- sharing app, that is nowadays considered as one of the most popular social media platforms. As social media in general is changing so fast that any statistics provided will very soon be out of date again (Noone et al., 2011). However, the latest statistics from 2019 show that the user base is growing and very active with 500 million people using it every day and 1 billion monthly active users (instagram-press.com, 2019) 2 million monthly advertisers (business.instagram.com, 2019) and the most liked photo has over 53 million likes and is a photo of an egg.

Figure 9: Photo of the most liked Post on Instagram



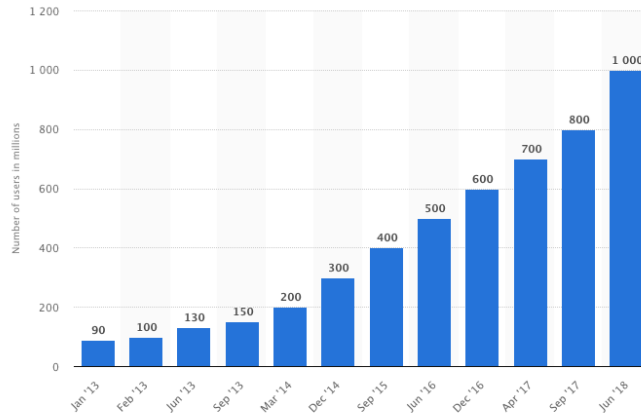
Source: West (2019)

As a joking experiment to beat the previous most-liked photo on Instagram (from Kylie Jenner, 18 million likes) the account @world_record_egg posted an egg. Surprisingly it caught the attention of many and in only 10 days the record was broken. This is a good example how viral social media campaigns can get spread if well placed (West, 2019).

According to Hootsuite (2019) there are 500.000 active influencers on Instagram and influencers are charging up to \$100.000 for a sponsored post. Also, 78% of Influencers prefer Instagram for Brand Collaborations and 55,4% of influencers use Instagram Stories for sponsored campaigns. A very interesting point also stated at Instagram's website is that 60% of users discover new products on Instagram and 75% of users are being inspired by posts to take action (Hootsuite, 2019).

According to Pohl (2018) there are various tools to find influencer in different social media channels. By giving analyses and looking at keywords and key numbers of certain profiles. Pohl also states another way to find the right influencers and start an automated campaign is to use the so-called social influencer marketplaces. The platforms are designed to bring companies together with influencers, and the entire campaign will be organized for you from A to Z. These platforms focus on automating and optimizing the entire campaign.

Figure 10: Number of monthly active Instagram users



Source: Statista (2019)

4.4 How to measure the value of an influencer

One of the most difficult questions of this topic is how to measure the value of an influencer. Until today it is a vague measure and results may differ from the reality. There are different perspectives to measure the value. Kawak et al. (2010) for example analyzed three different components: the number of retweets, the number of followers and the page rank. Cha et al. (2010) exchanged the factor page rank with number of mentions. He observed that not every component needs to be coherent. In other words, the user with the most followers doesn't have to have the highest number of mentions or retweets.

Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influence doesn't only depend on the number of followers, he stated that members with the same amount of followers don't necessarily have to have the same amount of influence. Aligned with that opinion is Radey (2015) who mentions that followers can be collected easily or even be faked. For him passion in an influencer and relevance of his posts are the most important factors next to the followers. For Schoenhoff (2016) alignment with the brand matters the most and for Krasniak (2016) authenticity is crucial. In order to measure the influential power of an influencer to a consumer or decision maker, Woods (2016) explains that rather than shared voice, the strength of persuasion is more powerful. Brown and Hayes (2008) use the four-

dimension metric, where the criteria are frequency of impact, quality of impact, market reach and closeness to decision.

Menges (2019) explains that the relevance of influencer marketing is rising continuously while the general amount of likes and comments diminishes. With this development the way the success of an influencer is being measured changes. The achievements of a campaign are now being measured by KPI's like brand fit and brand sympathy. This is shown, for example, by a study from Bottesch and Goldhammer (2018) for Goldmedia as well as from the influencer marketing specialist Influry (2017), which predicts that the market volume for influencer marketing in the DACH region will be 990 million euros in 2020 - corresponding to growth of 20 percent. This study also shows that Instagram is the most relevant channel for influencer marketing (75 percent), followed by Facebook (72 percent) and Twitter (50 percent).

However, last month Instagram announced that in some countries, including Brazil, Canada and Australia, they would hide the number of likes under a post and only make it visible to the person who created the post (Yurieff, 2019). This is to ensure that members focus on the content of their posts and are less concerned about how many likes they can get for a post. The parent company Facebook is also currently talking about no longer publicly displaying likes. A study by the Bundesverband Digitale Wirtschaft (2018) shows that anyways more than 95 percent of marketers surveyed select influencers on the basis of how well they fit the brand and how well their followers match the target group, not on the basis of likes and comments. So-called micro influencers with fewer than 50,000 followers, through which a brand can address very specific target groups, are enjoying increasing popularity. There are around 52.000 of these influencers in the DACH region (Menges, 2019).

A central part for influencer/brand measurements play analysis instruments such as for example the Klout or the Q score. The Klout is a system where influencer or celebrity value can be determined or identified. The Q score also tries to figure out why publics do or do not respond to certain celebrities by providing qualitative research (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015). In order to calculate the score, Klout monitors the social media accounts of the individuals and evaluates over 400 "signals" across all the channels (klout.com, n.d.)

4.5 Influencers in the Luxury Tourism Industry

Social media has a thorough significance in the hospitality and tourism industry, as one of the main characteristics of social media is the sharing of content between people from all around the world. This correlates with the interest of travelers (O'Connor, Höpken, & Gretzel, 2008). The main reasons why marketers use influencer marketing are: enhancing brand endorsement; increasing brand awareness; attaining new target groups; growing share of voice (i.e., the online presence in percent compared to the competitors); and improved transformation into sales (Nanji, 2017). However, not all companies are a fan of social media marketing, as there are uncertainties about legitimacy (Noone et al. 2011).

It is very important for Hotels, who are corporate entities, to find out how to create an online profile aligned with the brand promise. At the same time they have to interact in a natural and transparent way with consumers. Finally it should be the way that trust is built and the consumer is engaged (Noone et al., 2011). As a method hotels and in general the travel industry work, since a few years closely together with influencers. For top hotel brands influencer marketing has even been the latest trend. For example Starwood, Marriott, Hilton and Ritz Carlton have made use of big influencer campaigns (Socialtables.com, 2019).

The use of influencer marketing is still growing. One reason is the adoption of ad blocking software's by more and more consumers who want to prevent the masses of information received. Currently 47% of web consumers are using AdBlock (Trustyou.com, 2019). AdBlock helps the users to block the ads of any kind of companies by filtering content. Like this it prevents advertisements from being displayed, which makes it harder for companies to advertise their products. It exists for Google Chrome, Apple Safari, Firefox, Opera and Microsoft Edge web browsers (Chrome Web Store, 2019; Safari Extensions, 2019; Firefox AdBlock, 2019). According to Moore (2002) commercials are seen as annoyance, and consumers must, in order to see the content they want to see, suffer through them. Due to the introduction of AdBlock consumers have the power to control what they see. Hence companies are looking for alternatives to advertise, like influencer marketing, as those ads will still be seen by the consumers.

Another reason are the display algorithms that platforms like Facebook are using in order to make it harder for companies to organically appear in the social media feeds (Hewett, Rand, Rust & van Heerde, 2016). This means that the presentation and ordering of posts are controlled by the

algorithm, which should have the effect, that users see what concerns them the most without appearing organically (Barnhart, 2019). A third reason, especially considerable by Hotels are the high fees of the OTAs. With fee's up to 20 % of commission Hotels seek for new ways to encourage direct booking or less costly bookings. In order to lower the amount of bookings via OTAs, companies like Starwood hired influencers who post pictures of the property and add a link below where direct booking is possible. Starwood added a link to LiketoKnow.it, through this link the customer can book directly at the hotel (Socialtables.com, 2019). LiketoKnow.it is an affiliate link, which means when a hotel is booked through that link the influencer gets a small commission (Shane, 2016).

However, in 2017 Instagram introduced a new action button, where direct bookings at websites are made incredibly easy. Companies can select between four different action buttons: 'Book', 'Reserve', 'Get Tickets' and 'Start Order' (Gabriele, D., 2018).

According to Influencer Marketing Hub (2019) the purchase Link on Instagram is a huge trend and will continue to spread around companies over the next years. They predict that Instagram will move more and more towards company friendly advertising. Apparently they are even testing a new, analytical platform now, that encourages businesses to grow. This makes it even easier for hotels to modify the way they reach consumers and the way consumers want to engage with them (Gabriele, D., 2018).

Berthon et al. (2012) stated that creative consumers are the generators of the new media era. Due to their networks of cohorts and friends it is them who create the most value-added content, not the companies. Of course this can be slightly scary for companies, giving up their control and letting the influencer do what he thinks is best. Anyhow it is important for companies to be authentic and giving influencers the freedom to be creative. Gabriele (2018) recommended to encourage the influencers to be authentic but at the same time making clear, that they are staying in the Hotel in order to tell the story of the hotel. Of course companies have to check in advance whether the influencer has a style that fit's to the company or not (Trustyou.com, 2019). After all it is very recommendable that hotels set explicit terms in their cooperation's with influencers (Lorenz, 2018).

Poll (2014) stated that 72 percent of millennials prefer rather than spending their money on material objects to spend it on experiences. Millennials are the generation born between 1980 and 1999. The older end of this generation is now experiencing their peak spending years, while the younger end is on their best way there (Lee, 2013). According to a research of Barkley (2011) 55% of millennials

believe that the purpose of traveling is to have an adventure and to discover, and 70% want to learn from the culture of the place they visit. According to this statement luxury hotels have to change their strategy, find a way young travelers can have an authentic experience and connect with the culture for sustainable memories (Luxe, 2019). Lee (2013) also states that millennials are social creatures who like to share their experiences through social media and get inspired from others. Hence when it comes to millennial luxury travel marketing, social media a crucial tool to reach this generation.

From the side of the influencers, more and more are promoting the tourism industry as they want to travel to amazing places and deliver stunning pictures for their followers. These alliances of hotels and influencers bring some positive effects to both sides. One of those effects has to do with the theory of trust (Christou, 2015). In order to find out how to form trust in a brand further factors need to be investigated. However, social media marketing can be a form of creating trust to consumers. Like mentioned before, social media users create a relation with the people they follow (the influencers) and this relation brings more trust for a consumer in a company than a normal advertisement. Increasingly a person's identity is composed through shared pictures, daily posts, post comments and profile updates. It is a must to have a Social Media account in order to uphold personal relationships and be socially active (Tsay-Vogel, 2016)

Influencers of course get some benefits for their work, these can be from discounts to full package hotel stays (Netherwood, 2014). Some hotels or destinations also offer car rentals and activities around the area (Shain, 2014). According to Kilian (2017) the influencers activities, accommodations and flights are usually covered by the hotel or destination.

4.6 PR Agencies and Influencer Marketing

Very little research has been done about public relations and tourism as only few researchers gave attention to that field (Tilson & Stacks, 1997). According to Deuschl (2006) this has changed in the last years. Now travel and tourism isn't regarded as "soft news" by journalists anymore. Nowadays tourism and media are even interdependent. In fact, every single national newspaper has a supplement or at least a weekly page concerning travelling destinations (Campaign Magazine, 2006). Tourism destinations need media images, according to Jenkins (1999) most likely even more than services or goods in general. Especially when the reader has never been in contact with the

destination, media representation and the so called “story telling” is highly important (Jenkins, 1999). According to Lerbinger (1997), news media has the greatest impact on the viewer, even stronger than that of campaigns or advertising images.

What PR does is giving a firm a reputation. The link between reputation and media coverage can be found in cultural and media studies (Cohen, 2002; Thomson, 1998). According to L’Etang, Falkheimer & Lugo (2007) in order to engage in relationships between hosts and tourists and issues like creating awareness of environmental problems, tourism depends a lot on PR practice. What a PR firm does when it comes to influencer marketing could also be described the way Sammis et al. (2016) describes it “the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand massaging with their audiences in the form of sponsored content”. Porter et al. (2009) states that when professionally working with an influencer, two-way communication starts and experts can communicate with the community through the blogger, while taking part in forming the way customers see the organization. In public relations literature two-way communication is seen as the highest standard for the practice (Dozier, Grunig & Grunig, 1995).

PR’s core goals fit perfectly to the work of influencer marketing: positively impacting public behaviors, opinions and social attitudes (mediakix, 2016). A number of recent studies show that for most of the brands, influencer marketing has become an essential part of social media marketing or PR. As a survey has shown, 60% of marketing professionals used influencers within their marketing strategies in 2016. Most of the companies used influencer marketing to target distinct or hard to reach audiences (Krasniak, 2016).

A challenge that brand managers and PR agencies face today is that consumers impact brand equity more than ever. It seems quite hard to control the brand reputation in an climate which is more and more out of their control (Booth & Matic, 2019). However, PR practitioners can profit from social media marketing because they can target interest-specific groups who are in search of information that are relevant to them (Waddington, 2012).

4.7 Influencers and Sustainability

In the literature the term sustainability has many different definitions, regularly focusing on environmental matters. Anyhow, a definition that has gained global use describes the term sustainability in three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. This more comprehensive

definition is referred to as the “triple bottom line” Elkington (1997). Hence a sustainable consumer in the broader sense is a person whose purchase attitude and behavior is affected by one or more of these three ‘pillars’ Gilg, (Barr & Ford, 2005). stated that including the consequences of social, environmental, community and personal effects into account while purchasing is considered as sustainable consumerism.

According to Barber and Deale (2013) various studies have shown the divergence between actual purchase decisions of consumers and the awareness and approving mindset of consumers towards sustainability. However, according to the Hartman Group study (2017) consumers nowadays view sustainability more holistically than ever, 87% of consumers even feel that sustainability impact their attitudes, values, and actions to some degree. Especially the topic environment has moved from a brink zone to a common issue, which shows an increase in consumers environmental awareness (Kalafatis, Pollard, East & Tsogas, 1999). A number of factors might be a reason for the increased consciousness of consumers, like media coverage, stricter laws and in general a greater attention to environmental problems (McIntosh, 1991; Butler, 1990; Tapon & Leighton, 1991; Wagner, 1997). Therefore, a general concern about one’s every day custom and the impact that it can have on the environment has increased (Krause, 1993).

According to Haaren et al. (2005) social media and other web tools could encourage social education by promoting a new way of awareness creation through interacting with users and passing on information in a greater social context. However, sustainable matters are often based on professional expertise and scientific subjects can be difficult to communicate to an amateur audience. Therefore, a way to reach lay groups could be by visualizing environmental ideas and concepts through images and impressions of sustainability that viewers are accustomed in their day to day life (Schroth & Helfer, 2017). Sensitive topics that are visualized as familiar situations can trigger strong positive feelings on the one side but on the other side, they can also stimulate emotional feelings that confuse, hurt or shock people (Nicholson-Cole, 2005).

Many brands have taken on sustainability development and responded to it by announcing green products (Kalafatis et al., 1999). This again has led to the introduction of green marketing. Charter and Polonsky (1999) defined ‘green’ marketing as a type of marketing where the interrelations between environment and product are being marketed or promoted. The approach of green marketing was familiarized in the late 1980s, this was the first stage of ‘green’ marketing (Peattie and Crane, 2005). At the same time the consumption of goods or services, that are helpful for the

environment (conservable, recyclable or aware of the environment) refers to the 'green' purchase behavior (Mostafa, 2007).

In general marketing often didn't have a good reputation when it comes to the topic sustainability because of promoting goods and services that have a negative impact on the environment.

Nevertheless, many researchers have now accepted another point of view. They see the potential of the reach and what impact it could have to promote sustainable topics. In literature and other scientific papers 'Green' marketing is the most popular concept regarding sustainability (Lee, 2008).

When looking at the hotel business, Graci and Kuehnel (2011) mentioned that nowadays there is a higher probability that hotel guests make sustainable lifestyle decisions as they are more aware of sustainability issues. Their choices, whether at home or while traveling go from driving fuel-efficient vehicles and recycling to consuming organic food. However, apart from the growing interest in sustainability, it doesn't seem to be a criteria when choosing a hotel for most of the guests. Decisions are rather made on the location, services and amenities (Barber & Deale, 2013). Anyhow, according to Lee (2013) Millennials have a different view on the situation. They are concerned about social responsibility when travelling and next to experiencing new sites and enjoying local restaurants, they wish to contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens and the world. Millennials try to support their beliefs in all kind of situations as they grew up in an increased social environment. As social media plays a big role in the next generation, Influencers promoting sustainability could be a great input and step towards a more sustainable world.

5. METHODOLOGY

In order to explore how to enhance influencer marketing and for luxury hotels and PR agencies a qualitative approach was selected. Qualitative research provides the advantage of the richness of data gathered (Moretti et al., 2011). According to Silverman (1998) it also simplifies the understanding of a person's emotions, feelings and thoughts.

As influencer marketing as well as the tourism sector are based on emotions and feelings in-depth interviews were considered as a suitable data collecting method. Qualitative research is very useful in order to understand the purpose of a situation or an experience, as well as the complexity of an interpretation (Atieno, 2009). Influencer Marketing in the travel sector is all about experiences and hence a qualitative research method was considered as appropriate. In general open-ended questions, which are used for interviews, have the ability to generate rich and meaningful responses with an explanatory nature and that are sometimes unanticipated by the researcher (Denzin, 2009).

In order to enhance Influencer Marketing for the luxury tourism sector interviews with hotel managers and influencers were conducted. Two different types of interview guides were created. One for the hotel managers and one for the influencers. Both were available either in English or in German. The interview guides for the hotel managers included questions related to influencer marketing from the point of view of luxury hotels who had experiences with influencers. On the other hand the interview guides for the influencers related to their experiences with luxury hotels. To interview both, the hotel managers and the influencers, opened the possibility to hear arguments from both sides and to find out if there are differences in the way they see the business of influencer marketing.

The interviews were loosely structured around a series of questions: What are the advantages/consisting problems of influencer marketing, how can it be improved and what will the future be like. Anyhow, the participants were free to address issues or add comments that they thought were important for that topic.

All interviews were held and transcribed in English apart from one which was conducted and transcribed in German due to the participants better and more fluent skills of this language.

Concretely, 9 in-depth interviews, lasting 40 to 60 minutes were conducted. Five of the respondents were influencers and four were marketing managers of luxury hotels. This enabled to get a sense of how both sides perceive influencer marketing in connection to luxury hotels. The respondents have been chosen through the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where research participants recruit other respondents. Usually it is used when participants for a study are not easy to find (Noy, 2008) The metaphor 'snowball sampling' is used as like a snowball when it starts rolling, it gets bigger and bigger as it picks up more snow (statisticshowto, 2014).

The chosen influencers have a focus on travel, especially the luxury sector and have a high follower base. Respondent #1 has 53.800 Followers; Respondent #2 has 55.500 Followers; Respondent #3 has 95.100; Respondent #4 has 112.000 Followers and Respondent #5 has 368.000 Followers. They all have a German background and hence are interesting for the German market. Four of the interviewed influencers work often together with Schaffelhuber Communications and have some years of experience and one is a well-known international travel influencer with a very high number of followers.

Regarding the marketing managers interviewed, all of them work for luxury hotels. These luxury hotels all have five stars. Two of them are located on the Maldives and two are chains that are located all around the world. Schaffelhuber Communications is the PR agency of these luxury hotels. So, the contacts were almost fully established through Schaffelhuber Communications and were the ones who were willing to take part in the study. Three of the marketing managers have more than 8 years of experience in marketing. All four of them have many years of experience in the hospitality sector. However, All marketing managers work or have worked together with influencers for their hotels and can give an overview over their experiences.

The interviews were held personally or via Skype between August and September 2019. Consent forms were signed by participants and the interviewer, mentioning the purpose of the research and clarifying confidentiality matters. In order to respect privacy of the participants their names will not be disclosed. Regarding the data analysis, it is necessary to mention that there are only few studies who focus on influencer marketing (Woods, 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Bakshy et al., 2011; Ewers, 2017) and none of them focuses on luxury hotels which means the research was not guided by prior theories but by the data collected.

In order to analyze and interpret the data the computer-assisted soft-ware program Nvivo, which is a qualitative analysis tool, was used. In order to get a deeper understanding of the data, Nvivo helps with the procedures of open, axial and selective coding (Siccama and Penna, 2008). As this is a qualitative research it has to be validated by its “appropriateness” of the tools (Leung, 2015) compared to quantitative research which can be validated through statistical tool. In order to get validity the interpreted data complied with Maxwell’s approach (1992) where he states that the aspects and mindsets of the participants must be respected. During the interviews extensive notes were taken as well as audio records in order to provide a correct representation of responses. Interviews transcriptions can be found in the Appendices.

11. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to discuss influencer marketing in the luxury tourism sector, results of the interviews were categorized according to the main topics that emerged: target group luxury hotels want to reach through influencer marketing; reasons luxury hotels do influencer marketing; finding influencers; how hotels can trust influencers; the value of an influencer and how to measure it; how Hotels perceive influencers and how they can attract them; what hotels offer influencers and the other way round; contracts; the Importance of Sustainability for Influencers and Hotels and future of influencer marketing. As both sides, influencers and hotel/marketing managers have been interviewed both perspectives are being shown and the differences explored.

6.1 Target Group Luxury Hotels want to reach through Influencer Marketing

As Wong (2014) stated, the challenge of influencer marketing is to identify and select the right influencer for the company, whom has a strong impact on their target group and to get the influencer to include their products in their posts. Respondent #6 a marketing manager comments in his interview: “We want to reach the young demographic of travelers between the ages of 25 - 35. As social media is a global platform, we want to reach out to people from many different countries all at once”. This means they are looking for a relatively young age group and want through social media they can reach a high amount of people through only one channel.

Brown and Hayes (2008) mention that in order to find the right influencers companies must first have a clear idea of the target group they want to reach. Products and services should be in line with the influencers profile and style. Accordingly respondent #9 states that: “Mostly it depends on the influencer and if he/she really has an influence on their followers. Obviously we look for influencers who have high net worth followership that is interested in luxury vacation”.

In general almost all marketing directors stated that they want to reach the age group from 25 to 40 or older who are lifestyle and travel interested. By asking the influencers, who all have a focus on travel and luxury, the responses to the question of who their target group is quite matched the ones from the hotel managers. Respondent #2 for example mentioned: “Between 25 and 35 if not older and as many male as female, even a little bit more male. Many of them have an Interest in travelling, fashion, lifestyle and sports”. Respondent #1 stated her target group are: “Young women between 25

and 40 years of age who have both feet firmly on the ground, love to travel, like to treat themselves to something and appreciate quality in all areas”. By ‘treating themselves’ it is meant young people who like to spoil themselves sometimes by buying something that they usually don’t buy in order to make them happy.

Some of the interviewed influencers focus on a niche market. Gillin (2007) states that Influencers don’t have to have a huge visibility, if they are seen in exactly the niche that the company is aiming to reach, they can be the perfect fit for that brand. Respondent #4 commented her target group as “Families & Couples in the age of 25 – 34, both represented man and woman but a little bit more woman. The Target group of families together with long distance travels is a niche, and that is our focus area, together with beautiful hotels. Hotels are often trying to find niche bloggers and especially for families in the luxury industry there are not many”.

6.2 Reasons Luxury Hotels do Influencer Marketing

The main reasons why marketers use influencer marketing are: enhancing brand endorsement; increasing brand awareness; attaining new target groups; growing share of voice (i.e., the online presence in percent compared to the competitors); and improved transformation into sales (Nanji, 2017). Respondent #8 a marketing director stated: “First of all, influencers are cheaper to advertise, then they gives more engagement – that’s what is very important nowadays – to engage people.”

Conducting the interviews another topic came up and also seemed to be very important, this was creativeness. Again Respondent #8 mentioned: “Influencers are getting very professional, they make new creative pictures and find new angles we don’t see anymore, that brings value to the resort”. For smaller properties the opportunity of getting good photo material also plays a role like respondent #6 mentioned: “Good influencers create unique content, which puts our property in a new light. They show a realistic guest experience, inspiring others to want to come to our resort. Many influencers we’ve worked with also provide us with pictures and videos we can use ourselves in our marketing communications, which is a great way for a smaller team like us to get beautiful content quite easily”. Thus we can see influencers often create value that goes beyond their duties and they also communicate it in a way their followers notice it.

A number of recent studies show that for most of the brands, influencer marketing has become an essential part of social media marketing. As a survey has shown, 60% of marketing professionals used influencers within their marketing strategies in 2016. Most of the companies used influencer marketing to target distinct or hard to reach audiences (Krasniak, 2016). Similar to the statement of respondent #7: “Because they could create awareness of an hotel and bring new guests”.

Nowadays many Luxury Hotels do influencer marketing in order to reach a relatively younger generation. Millennials are the generation born between 1980 and 1999. The older end of this generation is now experiencing their peak spending years, while the younger end is on their best way there (Lee, 2013). For the younger Millennials luxury travel is still a treat rather than something that is usual. Yet they might not be to afford themselves such a travel but they already have aspirations and are following top brands that are focused on leading hospitality and travel. This again is important for the brands, in order to create a relationship with the Millennials, who already in young years can set their preferences (independenthotelshow.co.uk, 2017). An influencer, respondent #3 described this quite well: “It is important because the generation that is using Instagram now is getting older. Also, young entrepreneurs are often willing to take a nice holiday. The lifestyle of people has changed. Now more and more people are willing to make more luxury travels to treat themselves”.

6.3 Finding Influencers

According to Mae Pan (2019) influencers can be found in four ways. The first option would be to search directly on Instagram, the second one is thru advanced search in google, the third one thru influencer platforms and the fourth one would be to use an app with a built-in influencer database and outreach. Typically influencer agencies help hotels, PR- or advertising agencies with the process of finding the right influencer. By representing the influencer, those agencies help him/her with contract agreements and finding them valuable opportunities to gain money (Woods, 2016).

Respondent #6 a marketing manager of a luxury hotel described: “ We don’t usually approach influencers ourselves. Our PR agents either reach out to interesting parties, or we get influencers reaching out to us directly through social media platforms or email. We usually get several requests a day”.

Interestingly all marketing managers accentuated that they frequently get requests from influencers. Respondent #8 stated: “We get plenty of offers and we almost don’t look at them anymore. It has become kind of a spam. The problem is we don’t have the time to look at every single application, we don’t have an explicit person who takes care of social media marketing, so we just don’t have enough people.” Often luxury hotels get that many requests that they don’t even forward them to their PR managers anymore. The same respondent commented on this issue: “We don’t forward the requests, we almost don’t even look at them. The thing is, as we are doing influencer marketing since more than three years now, it has become a quite popular place for influencers to request a stay. So now everyone asks for it”. However when it comes to requests from influencers marketing managers want them at least to be professional like respondent #9 states: “Direct Messaging is fine but the application should be professional”. A Direct Message (DM) is a form of communicating privately on social media that is only visible to the receiver and of course the sender. Instagram, Facebook and Twitter offer Direct Messaging on their platforms (bigcommerce.com, n.d.).

According to Respondent #7 only in some cases the hotels approach influencers: “We sometimes address influencers directly for special campaigns or for our online magazine”.

Plaschke Consulting (2017) listed some tools in order to find influencers, however almost none of the interviewed marketing managers, neither their PR agencies use those tools. When they reach out for the influencers most of the answers were similar to the one of respondent #7: “We search on Instagram / YouTube / Twitter / Facebook / etc.. On all social media channels there are influencers. Articles are helpful too. We only use a tool when it comes to see the real data behind the influencer: no fake followers, engagement rate, age of the followers and so on”. From all platforms Instagram was the one listed the most like respondent #6 emphasizes: “At the moment, Instagram is the biggest platform to find influencers. YouTube is also a very important platform. However, we prefer Instagram, as it is where we find a greater variety of different styles, as well as influencers with a wide reach”. Respondent #6 was the only one mentioning a tool that they think could be useful to find influencers: “We work with TravMedia, who have recently launched an influencer platform which could become very useful over the next few years”.

By confronting the influencers with the same question whether they approach the hotels or not more varieties of answers appeared. Respondent #4 states: “Actually, we often contact PR agencies. We are doing this since 2014, so by now we know a lot of agencies that are focused on luxury travels. There are also not that many in Germany that do that. Sometimes we also see beautiful destinations

where we want to go and then we try to find PR agencies that offer this. Sometimes, and more often actually we are getting requests from new hotels if we want to come and stay with them. If it suits with our time and fits to our profile, we do so". Most of the influencers base their requests to hotels on the destination. If they want to go to a certain place they send requests to hotels, like respondent #5 mentions: "If I'm going to some destination and I know there is a nice hotel where I can create some content then I would reach out to them."

Most of the influencers approach the hotels via email or through Instagram direct messaging. However, professional influencers contact them similar to respondent #1: "Most companies approach us. However, when we proactively approach a brand/hotel, we write a mail with our request, present the blog and send our media kit with all important information about the blog and our social media channels".

From the influencers interviewed hardly anyone uses a platform to promote himself. Respondent #2 however does: "I am logged on to a Zalando switching platform called Collabory. There companies send offers and on the basis of the data I can accept it or not, you can also negotiate. There I will upload all my postings, and they will check it. And then everything runs completely on the platform. The payment at the end also runs on the platform."

6.4 How Hotels can Trust Influencers

Mathew (2018) stated that unlike usual marketing strategies, for influencer marketing a high level of trust is required between the brand and the influencer. But how can this trust be created? When looking at it closely more than genuine trust, it is control that brings trust. Usually this is done by checking if a profile has fake followers, a real engagement rate, original content etc.. Most of the managers had similar ideas for evaluating if an influencer is trustworthy. Respondent #6 states: "We look at their past work with other brands and companies. If they have delivered on their posts in what looks like a timely manner, we know we can trust them. The way they approach us is also important. The influencers we work with have always been very professional and methodical in their approach". Respondent #9 comments: "Mostly by checking their profile thoroughly (does number of follower match the engagement, are the comments from bots or organic), check any references and see with what brands they are or have been working with. See if the content is original and creative or just copy paste and basically, google them as well and see what's coming up. 'Good' influencers mostly have some kind of mentioning other coverage in blogs and magazines."

Some of the marketing managers use platforms in order to control if the data of the profiles are correct, like respondent #7: “We check on a special paid platform – there they calculate reach of course but mostly engagement rate and age of the followers as well as the country where they are from”. By reach it is meant the number of followers (size of audience), adding the number of people who, through recommendations or search results, see the content created (izea.com, 2018). Engagement rate is the level of interaction people have with the Influencers, regarding a post (trackmaven.com, n.d.).

When asking the influencers how they make companies/brands trust them, most of them had a similar answer. Due to the fact that almost all of the influencers who have been interviewed are already longer in the business, many answers looked like the one from respondent #2: “I had the luck that I started already 4 years ago, at that time the topic was not so big. If I have already worked with companies then I still do it today - long term relationships are important too”. When asking how they made companies trust them when they just had started with influencer marketing the answer of respondent #4 was: “So, we started in 2014, at that time there were not many travel blogs, especially not in Germany. There were some blogs but everything mostly about world trips, bag packing but not luxury travel. I also from the beginning on tried to do it as professional as possible. Before I also have worked in the tourism sector, so I kind of know how it works”.

6.5 The Value of an Influencer and how to measure it

When asking the influencers what value they bring to a company many different answers came up. Respondent #5 highlighted the use of blog posts: “Reach, a social media blog, high quality pictures. Especially the Blog posts are of great value for a company. They optimize the search engine, so hotels can be found much faster. Also, the posts are visible on for a very long time”. Two influencers emphasized the additional photo material and creativity they bring to a hotel, like respondent #2: “I create content for the hotel and I do the content on my own without having to commission anyone. It would be much more expensive for the hotel otherwise. And of course I also bring the added value of the reporting to the hotel. I bring daily stories, postings, films cut together which I make available to the hotel. They can use them afterwards. I usually deliver more than I need, because the hotel can use it for their website or for their social media channels”.

Influencer #3 states the fact that he can put the hotel in a different scene is valuable: “I’m an experienced influencers and content creator. I have been moving in many industries, so I am very variable. And of course they also profit from the fact that I can put the hotel in a completely different scene. Something they maybe never thought of photographing. I bring professionalism, and a mixture of being natural and authentic”. Influencer #5 mentions the understanding of what her followers want to see: “The 350.000 followers, the sense of esthetics and understanding what my followers like and what they don’t like”.

However, stating the value is different than to measure it. Here one of the most difficult parts of influencer marketing comes up. There are many different perspectives to measure the value of an Influencer. Kawak et al. (2010) for example analyzed three different components: the number of retweets, the number of followers and the page rank. Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influence doesn’t only depend on the number of followers, he stated that members with the same amount of followers don’t necessarily have to have the same amount of influence. Aligned with that opinion is Radey (2015) who mentions that followers can be collected easily or even be faked. For him passion in an influencer and relevance of his posts are the most important factors next to the followers. For Schoenhoff (2016) alignment with the brand matters the most and for Krasniak (2016) authenticity is crucial. In order to measure the influential power of an influencer to a consumer or decision maker, Woods (2016) explains that rather than shared voice, the strength of persuasion is more powerful. Brown and Hayes (2008) use the four-dimension metric, where the criteria are frequency of impact, quality of impact, market reach and closeness to decision.

Almost all respondents mentioned the difficulty of measuring the value in their answer, like the influencer, respondent #5: “By likes on posts, or views of videos. Mainly that. It’s very difficult to measure the value in a tangible way”. Some of the influencers you a tool called Google Analytics. Respondent #2 describes: “I use google analytics. Then the value can be measured through the reach (Size of influencers audience). But actually it's not so much the reach that hotels need it’s more the overall package for hotels. Hotels want more the long-lasting content that can be seen in the internet over a longer period. For example Blogpost. They don’t disappear as fast as Instagram posts, but are available for the consumers for a long time”. Respondent #3 affirms:” Well, first of all through the reach but actually it depends on what kind of content you're doing. You can almost never measure the actual value at social media. You can have both extremes, sometimes a post goes immediately

viral, sometimes it's a flop. They should consider if the influencer represents the house as they want it. And every influencer brings their own vibes to the place, that can bring a lot of additional value".

There are different views of the marketing managers about how to measure the value of an influencer. Some measure it the classical way like respondent #8 explains: "Over the reach, the engagement rate, minimum number of followers. A few years ago our minimum number of followers used to be around 50k now as influencer marketing has grown that much we ask for at least 550k. It also depends on the market, for example Germany can be less as they don't have that many influencers; The Middle East should be more. If it's a celebrity they should have more than 1million followers – but those are just benchmarks". Anyhow, the marketing manager also added that they can measure it from the guests that are coming in through the influencers: "We also get a lot of guests that come to us through influencers. You know many good influencers have relations with bigger travel accounts and work together with these accounts. That means, that the travel account for example posts a picture that the influencer posted, so that brings us an even bigger reach". When asking how she knows if the guests come through influencers the answer was: "That's a standard question. We have a survey for the guests where we ask this. Also, we always make events where the manager can talk to the guests and tries to ask why they found the hotel".

Respondent #6 measures the value through future bookings or increase of engagement on their websites: "It depends on what we are hoping to achieve through the particular collaboration. Generally speaking, we look at how many new followers we gain as well as whether we get a notable increase in engagement on our profiles. If there's an increase in booking queries from their target audience, this is also a great signifier of a successful collaboration". Respondent #7 had some different ideas of how to measure it: "By the quality of their content and relationship, by their engagement rate with their community and their relevancy to touch our target (content + age of followers). We could also give them promo shortcode or tracked link to measure return". Some completely gave up measuring as they stated it makes no sense: "I don't. In the beginning we tried to give a monetary value to their work, however this is just not realistic as there are so many variables and soft factors which make it impossible to compare one with the other in terms of a value in numbers".

Respondent #1 recommended to check influencers first: "I would always advise you to check influencers with portals such as InfluencerDB very carefully before you start working with them".

6.6 How Hotels perceive influencers and how they can attract them

As Noone et al. stated in 2011 general press was overflowing with articles that encouraged hospitality companies to embrace the opportunity to increase brand awareness, that social media brings and communicate with consumers. And the hotel industry listened to the advice, nowadays almost every establishment has a social media presence across various platforms (like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and so on). Now the question is how hotels can use social media in order to attract the influencers to come to their property and what is it influencers are looking for?

More and more influencers are promoting the tourism industry as they want to travel to amazing places and deliver stunning pictures for their followers (Christou, 2015). This statement of Christou (2015) explains very well the perspectives of the respondents. Respondent #2 stated: "I am interested in the place beforehand; read about the one or the other hotel; recommendations; make research. Of course it has to be at least a 4 star hotel, because it suits me and the target group and it also suits the circumstances that you can also produce the right content. I also look at the hotel in advance - how is the hotel, does it suit me?". Similar to respondent #5 who explained roughly: "The reason I choose certain hotels is if I can create good images there". Poll (2014) stated that 72 percent of millennials prefer rather than spending their money on material objects to spend it on experiences. The answer of Respondent #3 suits here well: "I am interested in places where I can experience something new, an adventure, luxury, anything special". A study by TripAdvisor in 2015, showed that millennial travelers are adventurous and engaged. In order to gain a new experience, they usually want to travel to places they have never visited before (Amaro, Henriques & Duarte, 2016).

When asking the hotel/marketing managers why influencers want to come to their resorts similar perspectives appeared, like respondent #7 mentions: "Beauty of the place to make 'instagrammable' photos and spend good time to show off on their social media". To the factor of the amazing locations the reason of recommendations is being added by respondent #6: "First and foremost, would be the location. Being in the Maldives, our resorts are always in high demand. The fact that we are an international-level and established local brand is also appealing to influencers who are looking for an authentic and luxury experience. Recommendations of our properties have also been spreading by word of mouth amongst influencers. Past influencers have recommended us to their friends who have approached us for a stay". Respondent #8 highlights that change at an Hotel or at a property

can be a reason influencers want to come to the resort: “At the moment a reason is the snowball effect – like mentioned before, influencers see other influencers coming to our hotel and want to come as well. We can offer the most sought after content. We have a very active General Manager, which looks that the hotel is always coming out in new angles. The last years, we actually always had something new to show because many new parts have been added to the hotel. So we actually had new stuff to talk about. However, we didn’t change something significant but still there was always something to talk about”.

Another interesting point was if influencers would change something in the way hotels treat them and on the other side if hotels would change something the way influencers behave.

Interestingly a lot of influencers had the same point. In their opinion the staff should be briefed about the work of influencers and treat them accordingly. Responded #3 explains: “I think it's important to be treated in the hotel in a normal way, just like any other guests. In general I think the guests should always be treated well. I mean the guest is the king in hospitality. We always try hard to make the hotel look good, so I think the staff should not think in a negative way about influencers. That they think we travel all the time, try to get free stays and do nothing. They should be informed that we are there to help the hotel. But nowadays luckily more and more people know about the work of influencers”.

Very similar to the statement of respondent #4: “This depends very much on the hotels. Sometimes we are being treated like a king. That is a little bit too much for my taste. We like to be treated like normal guests. However, it is good when the staff knows that we are influencers because then it is easier for us to take nice pictures. Sometimes the employees don’t know that we are influencers, that makes our work much more difficult. For example, when the restaurant is still closed and we would like to enter it in order to take pictures while it’s still empty. At that point it would be good if the staff could let us in and enables us to take the content we need”. Chen (2019) stated that the difference from automated ad strategies and influencers is that they are human. So, companies should cultivate a relationship with influencers and take some time for them in order to assure that they understand the approaches of the company.

Berthon et al. (2012) stated that creative consumers are the generators of the new media era. Due to their networks of cohorts and friends it is them who create the most value-added content, not the companies. Of course this can be slightly scary for companies, giving up their control and letting the influencer do what he thinks is best. Anyhow it is important for companies to be authentic and giving influencers the freedom to be creative. Accordingly Respondent #2 states: "I wish the hotels would give the influencers more freedom. They shouldn't be too strict. The influencer is like an artist and the artist is creative and therefore you should let him have his freedoms. The hotels should also know that you are an influencer. They should care a bit more because you also deliver something. The employees should also be briefed about us. For example often we have to explain everything to the employees because they don't really understand the work of an influencer". As we can see the problem of briefing the staff about the work of influencers seems to be wide spread in the scene.

By asking the influencers what a no go is from hotels that want to work with them respondent #4 advised hotels not to try to fake their image through influencers: "I never experienced that yet, but it happened to a friend of mine. She was at a hotel, where there were so many constructions works. Then the hotel said they should take pictures of the sister hotel or photoshop the constructions away. I think that's a no go. It should always correspond to the reality. I wouldn't want to show something that doesn't exist".

According to Barckley (2012) millennials want to have authentic experiences and this is what influencers also want to emphasize as well.

On the other side, when asking hotel/marketing managers what they would change in the way influencers behave in the hotel or the way they work, comments were very positive. Respondent #6 explains: "We probably wouldn't change anything so far with regards to the influencers we've worked with in the past". For the question what problems they face with influencers the same respondent stated: "We've been very lucky, and we haven't had any major issues with any influencers so far. Sometimes you do get the issue where the content they create isn't quite what you're looking for in terms of quality or uniqueness, but so far we've been very happy with the content we've received".

Respondent #7 faced some problems: "More than 20% of fake influencers, very young followers, inconsistency of content (editorial quality and themes) or ego-content (vulgarity, selfies, each post is a photo of the influencer...)". However, respondent #9 has a negative picture and their hotel even

barely works with influencers due to experienced problems: “They ask for too much and do not value the service we provide them for their ‘work’. And an influencer should stick to the interests of their followers and not just travel to a beautiful place even though this is not in the interest of their followers”. The same respondent explains how the ‘ideal’ influencer for their hotel should look like: “Educated, sophisticated, hardworking and well-travelled with an understanding of our needs and the interests of their followers”.

The ideal influencer for respondent #6 should be: “Young, creative, innovative, professional, and well-informed people who love to travel and are passionate about authentic, sustainable hospitality”. Respondent #8 highlights again the focus of travel and not just about the influencer himself: “It should be a travel influencer, highlighting the destination, some of them have a great feet and beautiful pictures. They should show different beautiful places in the world, and it should not just be about them, they should have a focus on the location”. However, for the hospitality industry in general a good recommendation is to consider not taking the obvious choice like travel influencers. Travel influencers might not have the desired audience for some hotels. For example an all-inclusive resort for families may want to reach a different target group, than the usually young and hip travel influencer has. When choosing the ideal influencer focus should be on the guests. This influencer should be someone who reaches the target group hotels have in mind (Interweave, 2018).

6.7 What Hotels offer Influencers and the other way round

Influencers of course get some benefits for their work, these can be from discounts to full package hotel stays (Netherwood, 2014). Some hotels or destinations also offer car rentals and activities around the area (Shain, 2014). According to Kilian (2017) the influencers activities, accommodations and flights are usually covered by the hotel or destination. Correspondingly a marketing manager, respondent #6 mentions: “We offer complimentary accommodation for a short stay, usually 3-4 nights. We also offer complimentary return transfers, F&B, and a selection of experiences that would allow them opportunities to create the kind of content we want”. Respondent #8 states: “The hotel stay, they don’t have to cover anything and we plan a lot of highlight activities with them”.

Throughout all hotel/marketing managers interviewed, these kind of offers were standard. When asking influencers what hotels should offer them in order to visit the hotel they mainly focused on one point which was the question of time. In order to create good content they stated that they need a minimum of a three night stay. So does respond #4 who argues: “We need three days minimum if we want to create good content. They offer us the stay, the meals (half-board), sometimes also the journey and flights. Or inland flights if you want to go to other places. It also depends on how much media coverage the hotel expects from us”. Respondent #1 has a similar opinion: “It always depends on the hotel, the price category/destination etc.. However, it is important for us that we are always on site for three nights (and thus two full days) in order to produce enough material for the blog post”.

Respondent #5 mentions: “They offer complimentary stays, unique experiences, spas, dinners, flights and some of them offer also additional fees, so where they pay you”. In contrary Influencers offer them their service. Respondent #2 offers: “blog posts, Instagram stories and postings. And I also do little videos sometimes”. Respondent #5 states: “Posts and stories and sometimes hotel want images that I make for them and they post them as if they have made them”. Respondent #1 focuses on the blog posts: “Our focus is on detailed hotel reviews and travel reports on the blog. The reporting is accompanied by social media.” Also respondent #4 mentioned the blog posts: “I also do Blog Posts, Hotels really like that as even years later they get a thousand of visits per month”.

The hotel managers described the services of influencers mostly like respondent #6:

“Most influencers will offer daily posts on their feed, as well as Instagram stories throughout the stay. Some will also offer a blog post or a YouTube video, which is a nice way for them to review the property in-depth for their followers. We are especially interested if they offer high-resolution images for us to use for any marketing purpose. Respondent #8 highlights though back posts: “It is an exchange of services, we make barter agreement. The influencers need to post minimum 1 public post per day and Instagram stories. That also depends on the influencer. And then it’s always good to see if you can have a throwback post. Usually they do that because we have a beautiful location, so it’s also good for them to post pictures of our hotel”.

6.8 Contracts

Typically influencer agencies help hotels, PR- or advertising agencies with the process of finding the right influencer. By representing the influencer, those agencies help him/her with contract agreements and finding them valuable opportunities to gain money (Woods, 2016). Anyhow, if the influencer doesn't have an agency he has to negotiate the contracts himself with either the hotel or the corresponding PR agency of the hotel. When asking the influencers how they consider the contracts they make with the hotels there was not one that was unhappy with them. Mostly they use written agreements instead of a real contract, like respondent #3 mentions: "I make written agreements with them. I get the booking confirmation and the company gets the security that I post stuff". Respondent #4 states: "We rarely make real contracts with hotels. Mostly we make written confirmations by email. That's usually enough. Sometimes we had contracts but they were all very considerate. There are never adhesion contracts, where for example we are not allowed to mention competitors in some months after – we wouldn't be able to do that".

From the side of the hotel they seemed to have exactly the same attitudes, like respondent #9 states: "Mostly those agreements are only via Email and that's fine". Respondent #6 also prefers a more informal way of doing contracts mentioning as a reason trust: "We don't make contracts, we prefer to have a more informal understanding. We feel that this allows us to build a stronger relationship based on mutual trust".

By asking the influencers if they would prefer stricter contracts the opinion was quite split. Respondent #1 explained: "I think it's good to clarify the mutual expectations of Barter Deals in advance so that everyone is happy afterwards. In my opinion, a contract is important for paid cooperation's in order to clarify everything". Respondent #3 agrees to that opinion: "I think that depends, if it is paid everything should be fixed because if the contract is too open, and you maybe think it's enough you posted and then they complain because they wanted more posts or stories, then that's not convenient". Respondent #2 prefers more open contracts: "I like it when I have enough freedom to do my work." While respondent #5 prefers the strict version: "I prefer strict contracts because then it's very obvious in terms of expectations". So, more or less every influencer had their individual opinion about the strictness of contracts. Same comes when asking the marketing managers, for example respondent #7 states: "The contracts we make are not too strict. Influencers should have the possibility to stay creative". Similar to the answer of respondent #8: "We

don't sign a strict contract, we just have an agreement In writing". In contrary respondent #9 stated: "I think strict contracts are better because then you can be more sure to get the results you wanted". We can see it depends very much on the hotels/marketing managers or influencers preference when it comes to making agreements. Still, they all seemed fine the way they were concluding contracts it until now.

6.9 The Importance of Sustainability for Influencers and Hotels

Nowadays there is an increase in consumers environmental awareness (Kalafatis, Pollard, East & Tsogas, 1999). A number of factors might be a reason for the increased consciousness of consumers, like media coverage, strict laws, greater attention to environmental problems and the impact of big industrial catastrophe on public point of view (McIntosh, 1991; Butler, 1990; Tapon & Leighton, 1991; Wagner, 1997). Therefore, a general concern about ones every day custom and the impact that it can have on the environment has increased (Krause, 1993). Now the question is if Hotels guests also care about sustainability in an hotel and if yes, do the hotels consider the influencers lifestyle/sustainable actions when choosing them? From the side of the influencer it was explored if they care about sustainability in general and how their followers perceive this topic.

So, what actually is sustainability? The managers were asked what they understand under sustainability and their answers were quite comprehensive. Respondent #9 said: "For us sustainability actions are not just environmental actions, but also fair trade, ethical business behavior and compliance with international best practices and standards". Respondent #6 stated: "Sustainable actions are ones that don't leave a lasting, negative impact on the environment or its inhabitants. Sustainability is about not only maintaining, but also improving the natural environment so that we can continue to appreciate and gain from our surroundings for generations to come". Respondent #8 highlighted the focus of the hotel: "We have a large focus on the ocean, micro pollution. We also have coral reef nurseries. I think it could be great if an influencers would participate in an ocean dive to collect trash, for example doing an action where they collect the plastic and send it to a production where produce sneakers, or an action like that. We also care a lot about animals – turtles, manta rays, sharks, all endangered species". However, not all of them are aware that sustainability includes three parts, environment, social and economic although most of the hotel/marketing managers work for hotels who claim to be sustainable.

According to Craci and Kuehnel (2011) nowadays there is a higher probability that hotel guests make sustainable lifestyle decisions as they are more aware of sustainability issues. Their choices, whether at home or while traveling go from driving fuel-efficient vehicles and recycling to consuming organic food. However, apart from the growing interest in sustainability, it doesn't seem to be a criteria when choosing a hotel for most of the guests. Decisions are rather made on the location, services and amenities (Barber & Deale, 2013). When asking the hotel/marketing managers if their guests care about sustainability, all answers were quite positive. Against the statement of Barber & Deale (2013) respondent #6 announced: "The vast majority of them do, yes. There is a global trend of eco-awareness, and guests are becoming more and more discerning when it comes to their travel choices". Others, like respondent #8 said there was a difference between nationalities: "Yes, most of them do nowadays, usually it depends on the country they come from. European care more, Asians care less. But in general it's getting more and more popular. Our resort has also become more eco conscious in the last years". A similar statement came from respondent #7: "Yes, most of them, depending on countries. For example in Germany they care more about sustainability".

When asking the managers whether they consider the influencers lifestyle/sustainable actions, basically all of them had the same opinion. Respondent #8 states: "If they are connected with something it's a positive plus. Something that's relevant for them. That would be great, but there are not that many influencers that focus on luxury and sustainability at the same time. So we don't particularly look for it". Respondent #9 had the same opinion: "If we see an influencer does that it's always great, but it's difficult to find influencers that fit to luxury hotels and at the same time promote sustainability". Respondent #6 seemed a little bit more optimistic about it: "Absolutely! It's difficult to know how authentic people are through social media, but we do like to work with those who seem genuinely interested in sustainability and the kind of eco/conservation work we do".

At the same time the influencers were asked if their followers care about sustainability. Respondent #2 commented: "Yes, definitely, I keep noticing it. I travel a lot and fly a lot and traveling in itself is not the most sustainable think you can do. There I get feedback from time to time of people asking, if I actually think about the environment and why I have to fly so much and if I couldn't travel in a different way. It interests the people indeed and I notice there is a lot of potential. And I also notice when I address such sustainable issues, e.g. we are in this and the hotel and that is particularly famous for its sustainability, then I get a lot of good feedback there". In general millennials are considered to be more conscious when it comes to social, environmental and cultural topics

(Sheahan, 2005). Also, Bucatã (2015) mentions that millennials usually have been travelling more socially committed earlier generations. They are claimed to encourage social causes and more attached to brands that act respectfully towards social responsibility and the environment.

However, when asking the same respondent what he understands by sustainability actions, there didn't seem to be a deep understanding of the topic sustainability in general: "Hotels should be completely without plastic nowadays. Or for example when a hotel uses a lot of wood. Or when they try to work with their own means and recourses". Respondent #1 stated: "Yes, that currently plays a very big role". For the next question about the meaning of sustainability the influencer explained: "That would go a little beyond the scope of this interview. Basically there is of course an incredible amount you can do in the area of travel. From avoiding too many flights to the sustainable sun cream that doesn't pollute our oceans anymore". Respondent #4 explained: "Yes, every time they care more about sustainability. It's getting more and more interesting. Especially on the Maldives I like to include sustainability in my posts. The Maldives is such place to protect. Many times I get requests that ask me how it is with the topic sustainability in the hotels".

When asking for the understanding of sustainability actions the respondent stated: "I think it's not up to date anymore if the hotel uses plastic. For example, if they use plastic glasses at the snack bar. Especially at the beach where the plastic gets floated. We always collect the plastic there. My three-year-old daughter loves that. If I observe too much plastic in a hotel I always tell them. Of course, species-inappropriate animal husbandry is something horrible too. I never experienced that yet in the hotels we went but for example I wouldn't like if they have a dolphin pool or fish shows or something like that". Again, there is an understanding for sustainability but not as deep as it could or maybe even should be nowadays. Paludan (2015) stated that the biggest challenge towards a sustainable development is the fact that people don't understand the term sustainability. She explained that this is an educational and cultural problem arising by the lack of education and the decreasing understanding of the natural system that enables a life on earth.

The followers of respondent #3 don't focus on sustainability at all: "No on my profile not yet. But I have a friend who also is influencer and some of her followers told her she travels too much and that it's against the environment". A similar opinion has respondent #5: "Yes but it's not like a main trend. The people care more about the views and can they go and make a nice picture while they stay there". Here the question of understanding sustainability was answered like this: "Taking care about

the environment in a way it lasts long". In general when looking at the influencers a trend towards sustainability can definitely be found. However, there are only few who intrinsically seem to care about it, even if they see an interest in that topic within their followers.

The last question about this topic was if hotel/marketing managers think influencers could have an impact on customers regarding sustainability? All of them were quite positive that influencers would have an impact if they would take on this topic. However, respondent #6 also stated a negative point influencers have concerning sustainability in general: "Consumers do get inspired by sustainable actions and movements as seen on social media, so it is possible that influencers can impact customers to make sustainable choices with regards to travel and tourism. On the other hand, they could also drive more tourism towards a certain city or attraction eg. "Gates of Heaven" temple in Bali. This could lead to an over-saturation of the destination with tourists, often increasing pollution and disrupting the local culture". Koens, Postma & Papp (2018) mentioned the same problem: Social media can lure people to places that lack the needed infrastructure and hence support over tourism. For example if a well-known influencer mentions a location it may happen that a place suddenly receives unplanned masses of tourists.

6.10 Future of Influencer Marketing

According to Haapasalmi (2017) whom did a study of how advertisers see the future of influencer marketing in Finland, 86% of marketers are planning to do influencer marketing for their brands in the next three years with 68% of advertisers increasing or keeping their current budget for influencer marketing. So, the study predicts influencer marketing to continue in the future, 82% of advertisers believe it will even play a greater role in their total marketing efforts.

The respondents of this study were also quite positive about the future of influencer marketing but they definitely predict a change. Respondent #3 states: "That's hard to tell but I think it will move more and more in the direction of being close as close to your followers as possible or to make them experience my experiences through Instagram. I also think it will be more about the content. Today we can see a trend where the likes are being abolished. Some test markets are already introducing the abundance of likes on Instagram. So that means only you can see your likes, other people can't. They do that because they want to reduce fake likes. I think this will make the content more valuable

and not only the goal to reach as much likes as possible. If Influencer marketing is authentic it can reach many people really fast. It works much faster than newspaper articles. It's a medium that everybody carries in their pockets and that is always up to date so I think it will always be more important".

Respondent #4 stated: "I think influencers will stay important. It is a development. I think they will even become more important as the use of print magazines and newspapers etc. goes back. But I think there will be maybe more blogs or longer-lasting content. A few years ago, the hotels only looked at the number of followers. Nowadays, they ask for longer lasting content. An Instagram post happens so fast and is so fast it unseen again. That I think will change". Respondent #6 states: "It's hard to say. At the moment, Instagram is holding strong and seems to be growing day by day. Many experts predict that the bubble will burst as with other social media platforms such as Vine and even Facebook to some extent. At the moment however, it seems to be staying strong and is maintaining its relevancy amongst key target markets".

Respondent #8 thinks: "I think that it will continue, but more and more focused, more niches. There are still a lot that are more generic, just telling people to buy. I think it will not platform to sell their stuff. That will go back.. there will be other platforms to sell but these posts in the end only annoy hotels and clients. In my opinion it will be more open and transparent". Respondent #7 thinks influencer marketing will go back to the beginning: "Micro or Nano influence of the next-door girl, just as at the beginning 15 years ago. Strong engagement and influence on small local community around one passion subject". Respondent #9 said: "I would assume that there will be a development where many of these copy-cat influencers will disappear and only few ones remain – the ones who work hard on their content and strategy and keep evolving with the interests of their followers and managed to secure brand collaborations and established themselves as a brand".

As we can see a general tendency towards fewer, niche influencers with a high quality of content is predicted by the respondents of the interviews. Tiautrakul & Jindakul (2019) also stated that Micro influencers are going to have more importance in the future as those influencers might be more trusted by their followers.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. STRATEGY FORMULATION

After analyzing the company and conducting research with key stakeholders, this thesis will suggest strategies in order to offer a solution for the problems detected. First of all, strategic alternatives will be formulated, secondly, the proposed alternatives will be evaluated and finally, the most suitable alternatives will be chosen.

7.1.1 Strategic Alternatives

First Issue

The first issue detected is related to the problems the PR agency has when working with influencers. It contains the points of finding the right influencers; reliability/trust of an influencer and measuring the value of an influencer. A strategic alternative here will be to create a website where the procedure of finding influencers will be made much easier for all participants with a lot of advantages packed into one tool.

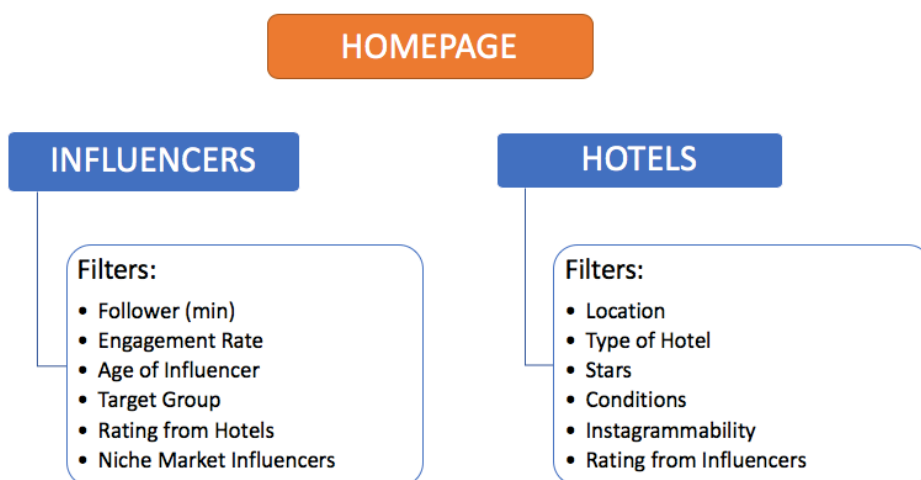
After the research made, we can see that finding influencers is either made through searching on social media, connections or websites that match influencers and businesses. However, the first two options are quite inefficient and considering the website, they are not as easy to handle and useful as they could be.

For this reason, a possibility would be to create a website for Hotels (or their PR Agencies) and influencers, where the search of each other is made as easy and efficient as possible. The idea is to use a platform similar to Booking.com which is open for every user until a certain point of the search, which will be explained later. When opening the website there are two search fields in the beginning. One search field states 'Influencers' the other one 'Hotels'. Influencers as well as the Hotels can create a profile on that website. The profile could be imagined similar as a Facebook profile with all the details needed. When entering the search field 'Influencers', various filters will be available in order to specify the search. Same appears when entering the search field 'Hotels'.

The filters for the Influencer search could be: Follower (min.); Engagement Rate; Age of Influencer. As mentioned before a study by BDW (2018) showed that more than 95 percent of marketers select influencers on the basis of how well they fit the brand and how well their followers match the target group, not on the basis of likes and comments. Hence another filter could be Target Group. Another criteria when looking for influencers is how this influencer can be trusted when not knowing him personally. For this reason an idea for another filter and a very valuable part of the website could be a rating of influencers. This could be a rating from 1 to 5 where Hotels, that have been working together with influencers, rate them. This topic will be covered later. However, a filter with the ratings could be very useful. One Filter could also be for niche market influencers. As Gillin (2007) stated that influencers don't have to have a huge visibility, if they are seen in exactly the niche the company is aiming to reach, they can be the perfect fit for that brand. Anyhow, this could be an interesting filter too, with many more to be elaborated.

Filters for the Hotel search could be: Location; Type of Hotel; Stars; Conditions. As the interviews revealed Influencers are looking for 'Instagrammable' places. The Independent (2017) stated that 'Instagrammability' is one of the most important factors for millennials when choosing a destination. Why not including a filter of the 'Instagrammability' of certain Hotels. Hotels can rate the influencers and Influencers can rate the Hotels, while 'Instagrammability' could be a part of this rating. There could be many more filters to think of.

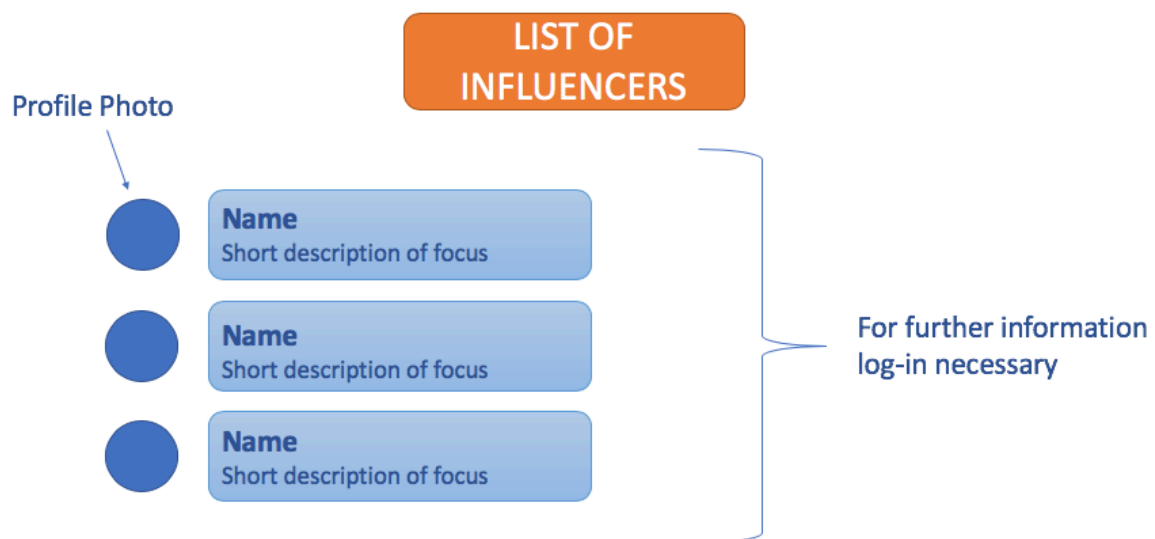
Figure 11: Website, Homepage



Source: Website, Homepage, Own Source (2019)

After adding all the filters needed a search process will start and the suiting Influencers/Hotels will be listed. From here on the path of the search process of the Influencers will be followed, as for hotels it is quite logical and similar to hotel booking websites. So, the list of influencers is shown. What can be seen is a profile photo, a name and a short description of the focus of the influencers. If Hotels are further interested, they will have to log-in, in order to see more details. The reason for the late log-in process is to allow hotels to see if there could be interesting influencers for them. Until now no other influencer search website enables this. However, the log-in process is an important step in order to gain some profit out of it. Otherwise, Hotels could just search influencers through that tool and then contact them directly. This could still be the case now, as the name is shown, however, there are very valuable information for Hotels available when logging in, so many clients might do it.

Figure 12: Website, List of Influencers



Source: Website, List of Influencers, Own Source (2019)

After the client has logged-in, and has its personal account as well as chosen a rate he wishes to pay (trial rate, one month, monthly...) he can continue to explore the data of the influencers. By clicking on one of the listed influencers a profile will appear. Like mentioned before the profile could be similar to a Facebook profile, only that the influencer can unfold his creativity at this page and design his own profile as personalized as possible. It should be seen as a 'creative page' where influencers can show their skills, talents and most importantly their personal style. As stated in the interviews,

creativeness is one of the greatest values an influencer can bring to an hotel and is very much appreciated by the managers as long as it represents the house well. Berthon et al. (2012) also stated that creative consumers are the generators of the new media era. Hence clients could see at the first glance of the page if the influencer is creative and if they like his style. A personal style brings authenticity and as Krasniak stated in 2016 authenticity is crucial for influencers.

Nevertheless, the greatest value of this page lies in the content. First of all there will be a short description of the influencer. There will also be a tool to message the influencer directly (DM) and links to all social media accounts and blogs will be given. Statistics of Followers, reach, and engagement rate will be shown too. After all, the most important feature of this page will be the ratings. Hotels can rate the influencers in various sections: trustworthiness/reliability, creativeness, authenticity, quality of content, passion about his/her work, and overall satisfaction. All these points have been discussed in the interviews and turned out to be difficult information to get. So, a rating like this will make the whole influencer business more transparent as well as efficient. Efficient because like this not much further research will have to be done.

There could also be included a payment option, that allows the hotels to pay the influencers (if agreed on this) for their work via that specific link. Finally this page could also include a 'follow up' button. This button helps, when a collaboration with the influencer is done, to follow up all posts of the influencer that are marked with the hotels name or hashtag.

Figure 13: Website, Personalized Profile



Source: Website, Personalized Profile, Own Source (2019)

Second Issue

The second issue detected is directly related to hotels and consists in the question of how to make the hotel an attractive place for influencers. The interviews gave a clear picture why managers want influencers in their hotels or why they use influencer marketing. First of all they are a cheaper form of marketing, secondly they approve their creativeness to present the hotel in a new angle, furthermore they get more engagement or a stronger brand endorsement through influencers and lastly they can take advantage of the good photo material. Krasniak (2016) also mentioned that an advantage is that they attract distinct or hard to reach audiences.

Obviously hotels that have a good location, like the Maldives, don't have to put a lot of effort in attracting influencers. The landscape itself is enough to get a flood of enquiries. Like Christou (2015) stated that more and more influencers are promoting the tourism industry as they want to travel to amazing places and deliver stunning pictures for their followers. However, for some luxury hotels it is not that easy to attract high quality influencers.

First of all Influencers want to experience something when travelling. It could be something new or an adventure, actually anything that is special. Hence hotels (or the PR Agencies for the Hotels) should investigate in what experiences they can offer. Each hotel has its opportunities to offer unique experiences, they just have to find them. A city hotel could offer roof-top concerts, special city tours with insider tips, shows, special classes (dancing, yoga, photography, cooking etc.), or inviting well-known cooks to the restaurant, also show cooking can be an amazing experience. As influencers are more and more looking for authenticity, cooking local food could also be a great option. A hotel near the country side could offer special nature related adventure walks, biking tours, informative trips with professionals who have a special knowledge. Hotels near the ocean have the chance to offer a lot of water sport experiences. For example hiring professional surf teachers, 'floating yoga' on a Stand up paddling board or any other beach experiences. In general Hotels near the nature can offer amazing outdoor activities that are mostly very 'instagrammable'.

Coming to the next point: 'instagrammability', a word that is in the center of attention of Influencers. They mostly look for places where they can take stunning photos that are worth posting on their Instagram account. So what hotels could do is to create a unique interior design, that is trendy or stylish and like this lure the influencers to their hotel. They could also create special outfits for the employees or create 'instagrammable corners' in the hotel, which means corners that offer a harmonious view or something that stands out prepared to be photographed. Basically everything that is outstanding will attract, as influencers are constantly searching for new material.

The last point to attract influencers is a very important one. It consists in the briefing of employees about the work of an influencers. First of all, the manager should be briefed about the influencers. How they work, what he can expect, what they need in order to do their work professionally and in general how to treat them. If the managers knows exactly what everything is about he should inform the employees and give them special briefing sessions, so they know what is going on. According to the interviews this was a very present point and seemed often to be an issue for influencers. Later on, when approaching the influencers, this point could be communicated to them. The hotel can leave a note that could look like this: "At Hotel ...[name of the hotel] influencers are highly appreciated, and treated as a king, like every other guest too. The employees will be informed about your arrival and are briefed about the work you are doing for the hotel. Like this we want to assure you will feel warmly welcomed and prepared to do everything you need to, in order to get great

posts.” Although it is nothing huge, a sentence like this will make the influencers feel comfortable and appreciated and that the hotel is aware of their work.

Third Issue

The third issue relates to sustainability. As influencer marketing is such a powerful tool it should be used for something more meaningful. Almost all clients of Schaffelhuber Communications have a focus on sustainability, nevertheless, this focus is often not shown enough to the outside. Often it is only visible when looking for the topic on the website, but in some cases even there it is hard to find. There is so much potential to create awareness through these luxury hotels. Obviously many of them don't want to trigger negative emotions to their guests and hence leave it a background topic. However, as we heard, Lee (2013) stated Millennials have a different view on the situation. They are concerned about social responsibility when travelling and next to experiencing new sites and enjoying local restaurants, they wish to contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens and the world.

This would mean that there is a general interest about the topic around the world, and the more people are aware of it, the more something is changing. As especially Millennials give attention to that topic, promoting sustainability actions through influencers on Instagram could be very powerful. As from the interviews we heard it is quite hard to find influencers that deal with the subject sustainability and at the same time travel to luxury hotels. However, the strategy should be to encourage influencers that travel to luxury hotels to at least address the topic in one of their posts.

So first of all, in order to encourage spreading this important subjects, when contracting the influencers, a part of the contract (whether it's written by Email or any other way) should contain to post at least one post and one story during their stay about sustainability. While some influencers will be willing to get out of their scheme and post something conspicuously different to what they are used to. For others it will be harder to do so, and they might find it difficult to find scenes that transmit the message and at the same time fit to their style of profile and harmonious pictures. In this case maybe the hotel can help, depending on the sustainable action they do, to think about how to visualize them in a suitable way.

In order to emphasize the idea, hotels could for example plan beach (or forest) cleaning days, maybe with employees and guests. Like this influencers will have good material to post. They could also organize workshops of how to build sustainable houses or how to cook sustainable dishes or about sustainable travelling. Everything could be thematized that has to do with sustainability and the actions that the hotels do anyway. It would be very important that hotel managers could spare some time when the influencer arrives to explain and show him all the sustainability actions they do. Like this the influencer straight away has an image of what is being done and his stay at the hotel will be fulfilled with more awareness.

As the interviews showed, not many of the questioned influencers have a clear picture of what sustainability actually is or what it all contains. Hence, an idea would be to give the influencers upon arrival a small introduction about sustainability in general. Another idea would be to create sustainable folders with the most important information and place it on top of their beds. To create more attention it could also be an idea to make a sustainable welcome basket with utilities that fit to the topic. Enclosed to the basket could be a little note explaining the utilities, why they are sustainable and a general introduction to sustainability.

To create awareness through influencers who focus on the luxury hotel sector could be a great way to reach people who don't focus that much on sustainability. Also, these people might have the means to change something, even if it's just by donating. However, most importantly it is to raise awareness on these topics. So, why not using a tool that is as effective as social media, and enforcing the message through its ambassadors, the influencers? Obviously, it would also bring the hotel into a good light, if people see the conscious decisions the hotel is taking and how responsible they are. Yet, another reason to encourage spreading sustainability through influencer marketing.

7.1.2. Alternative Evaluation

First Issue

The first issue was dealing with the problem of finding the right influencers efficiently; reliability/trust of an influencer and measuring the value of an influencer. As a solution the first

alternative suggested to create a website in order to handle all three problems at once. If that is not the case the three problems will have to be handled separately.

First of all for finding the right influencers efficiently Schaffelhuber Communications could use one of the existing platforms to search for influencers. Until now the company is searching on Instagram or finds influencers via connections, however working with a professional platform could help finding influencers faster. Moreover, it could help to identify the right influencers, with the right target group faster and make sure there are no fake followers.

Another very useful plus of some of these platforms is the monitoring of the campaign. Until now Schaffelhuber Communications monitors and reports everything by themselves which takes a lot of effort and time. These websites could also help to assure reliability and trust of an influencer, as they most likely have scanned the influencers they work with and maybe also have references of them.

Some of them also offer to measure the value of Influencers, nevertheless, as research and interviews showed the value of an influencer is always relative and depends on the needs of a company. Examples for platforms are: imagency.com; collabary.com and upfluence.com. However, not all of them provide all the mentioned advantages and usually those platforms are made for brands directly to use for their campaigns and not for PR Agencies who work together with different brands.

Second Issue

The second issue concerned hotels and how they can attract influencers. To the choices mentioned above an alternative could be the strategy of change. As influencers are constantly searching for new material to post, hotels could try to constantly change something. Which means trying to constantly create new things in the hotel or constantly changing existing things. For example adding new parts to the hotel, creating new uses of rooms, changing design, or constantly changing striking decorations. Like in the interviews said, it doesn't have to be a significant change but it should be something to talk about or it should have a story to tell.

This alternative however, is combined with a lot of effort and not easy to implement. Managers must be very creative in order to constantly think of changes that are worth telling to customers through influencers. To change something in a hotel often also depends on the given facilities. Furthermore, if is combined with construction works, guests might not be delighted.

Third Issue

The third issue was about influencers promoting sustainability matters on Instagram. The first alternative suggested to clarify this before arrival of the influencers by a contract. Influences should at least make one post and story on that issue. However, an alternative to the first solution could be, not to state it in the contract but offering incentives for the influencers if they post something on that topic. Some hotels might not want to interfere in the creative process of the influencers and let them do their work and post whatever they feel like posting. Also, for some influencers it might be a point that they are not sure about and they might not want to agree to such a contract. In this case to work with incentives could be a great solution.

For example hotels could offer a goodie bag (with sustainable utilities) or a special free meal (at a special location) or a free massage. Anything that is special and encourages the influencers to post about sustainability. In this way influencers would be motivated to raise awareness on that topic and at the same time get a personal advantage.

Anyhow, this alternative is combined with expenses for the hotel as they have to provide the incentives. This might lead to a demotivation of the hotel itself to promote their sustainability as they might not see the profit out of it. The outcome of an influencer post is very difficult to measure and hence the hotels might find extra expenses not worth it.

7.1.3. Alternative Choice

The alternatives to introduce and establish are the following:

- Regarding the problem of finding the right influencers efficiently; reliability/trust of an influencer and measuring the value of an influencer: Creating a new website. This solution would be innovative and could solve three issues at once. With higher costs at the beginning it could in the future be very profitable.
- Concerning the problem of how to make hotels attractive places for influencers: Designing experiences for influencers, highlighting ‘instagrammability’ and very importantly briefing employees would be the recommended strategy.
- Regarding the third issue of influencers promoting sustainability: Stating the demand of one post + story per stay at the beginning (in the contract). As there are so many influencers nowadays, a challenge like this, would automatically reduce the selection towards more open and conscious influencers.

Figure 14: Alternative Choice

Issue	Alternative I	Alternative II	Selected Solution
Finding the right influencers efficiently; reliability/trust of an influencer & measuring the value of an influencer	Creating an inovative website that solves all three problems and could bring revenue in the future	Use an existing platform to find trustworthy influencers and measures their value	Alternative I
How to make hotels attractive places for influencers	Create experiences for influencers; finding ‘instagrammable’ places; briefing employees	The strategy of change	Alternative I
Promoting sustainability through Influencers	Stating in the contract the demand of one post and one story about the topic sustainability	Offering incentives for influencers if they post about sustainability	Alternative I

Source: Alternative Choice, Own Source (2019)

7.2. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The table below describes the actions to be taken, the responsible person for this action and the timeframe expected for the implementation.

Figure 15: Strategy Implementation

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Butjet
Creating a new Website	Outsource – IT professional	4 weeks	€ 5.000,-
Designing experiences for influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	4 weeks	€ 2.500,-
Highlighting 'instagrammability'	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	2 weeks	€ 1.250,-
Briefing employees about the work of influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	2 weeks	€ 1.250,-
Promoting sustainability through Influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or	1 weeks	€ 625,-

	Marketing Manager of the Hotel		
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Source: Strategy Implementation, Own Source (2019)

7.3. STRATEGY EVALUATION

Schaffelhuber Communications is a renowned PR Agency in Germany for the luxury travel sector. In order to constantly satisfying their client's needs, they use various PR and marketing techniques including the latest trends like influencer marketing. As influencer marketing has become a very important part for creating awareness, Schaffelhuber Communications could implement new tools to be more efficient in that area. Creating the website in order to find the right influencers, checking reliability and trust of influencers and measuring the value of influencers would be a striking change and go a bit further than normal PR work. However, it would be something completely innovative and could lead, not only to an enhanced work flow, but also to new streams of income.

Regarding the problem of how to make the hotel an attractive place for influencers Schaffelhuber Communication could help a lot their clients. Together with the hotel/marketing managers they could find new opportunities when it comes to experiences for influencers and highlighting the 'instagrammability' of a place. Schaffelhuber Communications team is a young and creative team, with some brainstorming great ideas could work out. Regarding the briefing of the employees concerning the work of influencers, the team of Schaffelhuber Communications should first of all give a briefing to all hotel managers. The briefing could be via Skype, per Email or even personally. Later on, the hotel managers will have to make sure to brief their employees.

And the last topic related to influencers promoting sustainability is something that Schaffelhuber Communications should put a focus on. As the company is proud to have such a great collection of sustainable hotels, they should concentrate more on creating awareness in all kind of forms. Especially influencer marketing could help to spread the message. Schaffelhuber Communication could encourage their clients to do contracts with influencers including the topic sustainability. Not much effort lies behind this point, however, it could change a lot in the world.

All the relevant strategies could be achieved in a maximum period of one month: Creating a website, designing experiences for influencers, highlighting 'instagrammability', briefing employees of the hotels about the work of an influencer and promoting sustainability through influencers.

Results regarding the attractiveness of the hotel for influencers will be evaluated through anonymous online questionnaires that will be provided to the influencers at the end of each stay.

The questionnaire will cover aspects like the satisfaction of experiences, evaluation of the ‘instagrammability’ of the hotel and awareness and treatment of the employees. Aspects that have been listed in the interviews regarding influencers and their stays at hotels. These questionnaires will be evaluated by Schaffelhuber Communications and the relevant feedback will be given to the hotel/marketing managers.

Results of the efficient search through the new website can be evaluated through the amount of activity on the website. The evaluation of awareness creation of sustainability by influencers will be harder. However, a questionnaire could be handed to the hotel guests, asking questions like if they knew before booking that the hotel did sustainable actions and where they got the information from. The evaluation of this questionnaire can be done by the hotel.

7.4. CONCLUSION

One of the main conclusions achieved in this paper is that influencer marketing still plays a huge role for all kind of businesses and that there is a trend towards a growing interest for influencer marketing in the future. A very important part of the conclusions achieved is the impact of influencer marketing. It can reach far more people than any advertising strategy could reach ever before. Brand awareness is encouraged by the fact that influencer marketing engages people through communication. People trust influencers much more than they trust traditional advertisements which again raises brand endorsement.

This consultancy report aimed to analyze how to enhance influencer marketing for luxury hotels & PR companies. It is based on a theoretical background and has as well formulated strategies, implemented and evaluated strategies, in order to improve influencer marketing for Schaffelhuber Communications and their clients.

For a successful marketing campaign companies should make the process as efficient as possible, as otherwise a lot of time and energy will be invested for a value that is nearly impossible to measure. Existing platforms for influencer marketing do offer a good service, however, creating a new website could be way more efficient. Once the project is realized, and the website created, it will take no effort anymore for the company and on top Schaffelhuber Communications could gain revenue after

some time. This innovative alternative of the solution might attract a lot of international attention and could even increase the reputation of the company.

Regarding the hotels there is also still a lot they can improve for their strategy with influencers. In general hotels should change their marketing strategies towards a more influencer oriented perspective. Innovation is a key to success and the earlier hotels adapt and find new innovative ideas to market their products, the easier it will be for them in the future. Hotels should take the opportunity to enter another level of influencer marketing by changing the offers with enhanced experiences for influencers, enhanced visual aspects of the hotel and enhanced knowledge about current advertising techniques, such as influencer marketing. Not to forget passing on the knowledge to the employees as they are the direct connection to the guests.

Like mentioned above, influencer marketing can have a huge impact on customers. Hence, it would be a shame not to use such a powerful tool to spread the messages that are most important for our world. Creating consciousness about sustainability via influencer marketing should be something much more responsible businesses should do. It could not only have a positive effect on their reputation but it could also change the way people think and act towards a better quality of life for all of us. When already working with influencers, not much has to be changed in order to achieve these goals. Changing the conditions of a cooperation with influencers, by stating they should post about sustainability, will instantly help to select responsible influencers leading to the spread of more relevant information.

I believe that if my suggestions are implemented. Schaffelhuber Communications will be able to offer a much more efficient service to their clients. In some points they could even be innovators and in other points they could have an impact on millions of people. Moreover, it could be a possibility to further enhance their personal reputation around the business.

Finally, this experience dramatically impacted my view on how advertisement works nowadays. It showed me that social media is changing the world rapidly and completely new rules emerge. Hence, we have to be fast in adapting in order to stay relevant.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It is important to mention that the current study is not without limitations. Firstly, only 9 people were selected for the interviews. After all, the results may not represent the entire luxury industry for influencers as well as for hotels. Future research should approach a larger sample in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the situation. Generalization could be another concern as several problems were identified regarding search, identification, measurement, trust, and behavior of influencers.

The sample of hotel/marketing managers represent luxury hotels that mostly are located very well. These locations are ideal for influencers as they have beautiful landscapes and are often quite exotic. It is unknown whether the responses regarding influencer marketing would be different from other hotels that don't have such good locations. Furthermore, the sample of influencers mostly represent those influencers that have been since many years in the business. Again here, it would be interesting to interview newcomers and see if the results would be the same.

Future studies may explore further on the topic of practical ways to find influencers or the best ways to search and identify the right influencers on social media for businesses. As in this study hotel/marketing managers were interviewed as well as influencers, it could be interesting to interview professionals from influencer searching platforms or larger PR agencies. An opportunity for future research is the topic of measuring the value of an influencer. Existing literature and the interviews couldn't give a satisfying solution to this problem. As this measurement is so intangible, new ways are to be explored.

The topic of influencer marketing and sustainability is also not often mentioned in existing literature (Lindh & Johnstone, 2017). It is necessary to rethink ways of how influencer marketing can have a more meaningful impact on our world. Although sustainable consumption and awareness have almost become a mainstream mindset in our society (Carrington, Neville & Whitwell, 2010), further discussion with management and marketing departments regarding sustainability remain wanting (Denegri-Knott, Zwick & Schroeder, 2006).

Additionally, there is a lack of research that audits if social media marketing could justify companies spending's by actually bringing financial returns (Chan & Guillet, 2011).

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10. APPENDICES

10.1. Interview Guide

- Interview Influencers:
 - What is your target group of followers?
 - Why are they interesting for luxury hotels?
 - How do you contact companies?
 - Do you use a platform to promote yourself?
 - Do you wait for offers or do you address the hotels directly?
 - How do you make companies/brands trust you?
 - What value do you bring to a company?
 - How do you measure these values?
 - Do you recommend any new strategies to measure the value of influencer?
 - What do hotels need to offer in order for you to visit them?
 - What are the services you offer to hotels? (Only Posts and stories or more?)
 - How do you consider the contracts you make with the hotels?
 - Do you prefer to make strict contracts with hotels or would you prefer the opposite?
 - What are the reasons you want to go to a certain hotel?
 - Would you change something in the way hotels treat influencers?
 - What is a no go from hotels that want to work with you?
 - Do your followers care about sustainability?
 - What do you understand by sustainability actions?
 - What do you think the future of influencer marketing will be like?
 - What is your age?
 - What is your professional background?
 - What are your hobbies?

- Interview Hotel Managers or Marketing Managers from Luxury Hotels
 - What is the target group you want to reach thru influencers?
 - Why are influencers interesting for your hotel?
 - Which are the existing channels to find influencers?
 - Which of those channels do you prefer in order to find influencers?
 - Do you have ideas for new channels in order to find influencers?
 - Do you get many offers or do you address the influencers directly?
 - How do you know if you can trust an influencer?

- How do you measure the value of influencers for your hotel?
- Would you recommend any new strategies to measure the values of influencers?
- What do you offer influencers in order for them to visit you?
- What services do the influencers offer your hotel in order to get to stay there?
- How do you consider the contracts you make with the Influencers?
- Do you prefer to make strict contracts with influencers or the opposite?
- What are the reasons influencers want to come to your hotel?
- What would you change in the way influencers behave in your hotel or the way they work?
- What are the problems you usually have with influencers?
- How does the ideal influencer for your hotel look like?
- Do you consider the influencers lifestyle/sustainable actions when you contact influencers?
- Do your guests care about sustainability?
- Do you think influencers impact on customers regarding sustainability?
- What do you understand by sustainability actions?
- What do you think will the future of influencer marketing will be like?
- What is your age?
- What is your professional background?

10.2. Consent Form of Interviews Sample

Name of Researcher: Tatjana Waldburg-Zeil

I am gathering research information from Influencers, Hotels and PR-agencies in order to get a better understanding of luxury hotels and their cooperation with social media influencers. The enquiry I will conduct is for my dissertation as part of my Master Degree in Hospitality Management.

The aim of my study is to gain information and an understanding of social media visits in luxury hotels and the use of social media in the luxury tourism industry.

I would like to know if you could give me any information regarding experiences and opinions you have in this field. In form of a personal/skype interview or by sending the questions I would be most grateful if you would participate.

Contact details:

Student Email: tatjana.waldburg@htsi.url.edu; service@pr-sc.de

Supervisor's email: gilda.hernandez@htsi.url.edu

Please tick to confirm

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated for the above study.	Yes/No
I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	Yes/No
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my business or legal rights being affected.	Yes/No
I agree to take part in the above research study	Yes/No
I give permission for the interview to be voiced recorded.	Yes/No
I certify that the information shared with the researcher can be revealed in the study.	Yes/No
I certify that my personal details and position can be revealed for the study and published	Yes/No

Name of Person taking consent:

Date:

Signature:

Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

10.4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

During my internship and after literature review and brainstorming some problems concerning influencer marketing were detected. A recent study from Hilker consulting (2019) suggests that influencer marketing is becoming constantly more important for companies. Each year advertisers are allocating more money for social media advertisement, this is a sign that they are noticing better return on investments in that sector (Emarketer.com, 2015). Compared to other forms of classic marketing, a cooperative research study found that influencer marketing has the ability to bring about 11 times more return on investment (Rusu, 2016).

Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influencers display a certain composition of desirable characteristics that give them the chance to influence a disproportionately wide range of other people . According to Tuten & Solomon (2013) influencers are opinion leaders whose advices are being taken seriously. They have the power to influence consumers attitudes, behaviors and opinions.

For the hospitality industry influencer marketing is relatively new, compared to the fashion and cosmetic industry. However, there is a huge potential for them to do influencer marketing, as this industry is all about triggering emotions and creating desires of beautiful and interesting places. This is exactly where influencers are the best at. They create engagement and trust with a company and they know how to address their audience. If this audience is the target group of the hotel, influencer marketing could be the most efficient way of creating awareness

Instagram will be the platform used for influencer marketing in this study. According to Veissi (2007) Instagram has become the most used platform for influencer marketing. Instagram is a photo- and video- sharing app, that is nowadays considered as one of the most popular social media platforms.

Nevertheless, from the use of influencer marketing certain issues arise. Especially for luxury hotels the target group is difficult to align with most of the influencers. Other ongoing problems for influencer marketing is how to check their reliability as well as measuring their value. On the other hand Luxury hotels must try to be attractive places in order to attract the influencers and convince them to tell their stories. Last but not least, this paper addresses the issue of sustainability. Sustainability can bring influencer marketing to another level by making it a meaningful tool that changes the world in a better way.

Regarding the importance and actuality of this topic for the hospitality industry, as well as for PR agencies and regarding the detected issues, the research question will be:

How to enhance the use of Influencer Marketing for luxury hotels & PR companies?

- 7) *To interview hotel/marketing managers of sustainable luxury hotels and influencers in order to get their point of view*
- 8) *To identify strategies of how to find the right influencers for luxury hotels*
- 9) *To determine strategies of how to check reliability*
- 10) *To explore how to measure the value of an influencer*
- 11) *To analyze strategies to make hotels attractive places for influencers*
- 12) *To analyze how to use influencer marketing to enhance sustainable values*

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In order to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon it is important to investigate in prior literature. According to Hart (1998) it is crucial to know what has already been written about certain topics in order to better analyze the actual situation.

4.1 Influencer Marketing

In the recent years influencer marketing has been one of the most popular forms of social media marketing. Influencer marketing is a type of marketing where the target group are distinct individuals, rather than a whole market (Adweek.com,

2015). In a way Influencer marketing can be understood as a modern form of celebrity endorsement (Ewers, 2017) or virtual word of mouth (Whitler 2014). BVDW (2017) states that influencer marketing is a form of online marketing in which companies advertise with the help of influencers via their social media channels. Usually influencer marketing aims sales, the awareness of a brand/product or the improvement of the image of a brand.

4.2 The Influencer

Thanks to the power of the internet and new technologies that join people who share similar interests, many users, the so called influencers, attain a large share of voice in the market (Booth & Matic, 2011). According to Tuten & Solomon (2013) influencers are opinion leaders whose advices are being taken seriously. They have the power to influence consumers attitudes, behaviors and opinions.

Ríos et al. (2019) explained that the influencer itself in a social network is someone having a larger effect than an ordinary user. Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influencers display a certain composition of desirable characteristics that give them the chance to influence a disproportionately wide range of other people . These could be on the one side personal characteristics (like enthusiasm, credibility or expertise) or on the other side networking characteristics (like centrality or connectivity).

Companies are communicating their message through social media influencers, who are being trusted by their followers almost as much as a friend (Swant 2016). In order to clarify the term 'follower': a so called follower is someone who follows a person's activity on social media because they admire or that person (Cambridge Dictionary, 2016).

4.3 Finding Influencers

Typically influencer agencies help hotels, PR- or advertising agencies with the process of finding the right influencer. By representing the influencer, those agencies help him/her with contract agreements and finding them valuable opportunities to gain money (Woods, 2016). However, in order to find the right influencers companies must first have a clear idea of the target group they want to reach.

For identifying Influencers some brands use the Fisherman's Influence Model. For this concept firms apply the rule of "casting a wide net to catch the most fish", which suggests approaching those influencers with the largest follower base and reach that will boost the greatest brand awareness and hence eventually results in a purchase (Brown & Fiorella, 2013). Booth and Matic (2011) developed a customizable evaluation algorithms that help to find identify bloggers. This algorithm provides a score, the so called 'influencer index', that shows a company how valuable an influencer could be for that firm. Anyhow, the issue with this approach is that users are chosen manually and scored based on certain criteria (e.g., views per month, posts per month etc.). Like this automatic learning techniques are used in order to facilitate or approve the brand-blogger matchmaking over time (Sweet, Rothwell & Luo, 2019).

Instagram has become the most used platform for influencer marketing (Veissi, 2017). The latest statistics from 2019 show that the user base is growing and very active with 500 million people using it every day and 1 billion monthly active users

(instagram-press.com, 2019) 2 million monthly advertisers (business.instagram.com, 2019). Hence many companies search for influencers on Instagram.

According to Pohl (2018) there are various tools to find influencer in different social media channels. By giving analyses and looking at keywords and key numbers of certain profiles. Pohl also states another way to find the right influencers and start an automated campaign is to use the so-called social influencer marketplaces. The platforms are designed to bring companies together with influencers, and the entire campaign will be organized for you from A to Z.

4.4 How to measure the value of an Influencer

There are different perspectives to measure the value. Kawak et al. (2010) for example analyzed three different components: the number of retweets, the number of followers and the page rank. Bakshy et al. (2011) mentioned that influence doesn't only depend on the number of followers, he stated that members with the same amount of followers don't necessarily have to have the same amount of influence.

For Schoenhoff (2016) alignment with the brand matters the most and for Krasniak (2016) authenticity is crucial. In order to measure the influential power of an influencer to a consumer or decision maker, Woods (2016) explains that rather than shared voice, the strength of persuasion is more powerful. Brown and Hayes (2008) use the four-dimension metric, where the criteria are frequency of impact, quality of impact, market reach and closeness to decision.

A central part for influencer/brand measurements play analysis instruments such as for example the Klout or the Q score. The Klout is a system where influencer or celebrity value can be determined or identified. The Q score also tries to figure out why publics do or do not respond to certain celebrities by providing qualitative research (Hearn & Schoenhoff, 2015).

4.5 Influencers in the Luxury Tourism Industry

Social media has a thorough significance in the hospitality and tourism industry, as one of the main characteristics of social media is the sharing of content between people from all around the world. This correlates with the interest of travelers (O'Connor, Höpken, & Gretzel, 2008). The main reasons why marketers use influencer marketing are: enhancing brand endorsement; increasing brand awareness; attaining new target groups; growing share of voice (i.e., the online presence in percent compared to the competitors); and improved transformation into sales (Nanji, 2017).

It is very important for Hotels, who are corporate entities, to find out how to create an online profile aligned with the brand promise. At the same time they have to interact in a natural and transparent way with consumers. Finally it should be the way that trust is built and the consumer is engaged (Noone et al., 2011). As a method hotels and in general the travel industry work, since a few years closely together with influencers. For top hotel brands influencer marketing has even been the latest trend. For example Starwood, Marriott, Hilton and Ritz Carlton have made use of big influencer campaigns (Socialtables.com, 2019).

Poll (2014) stated that 72 percent of millennials prefer rather than spending their money on material objects to spend it on experiences. Millennials are the generation born between 1980 and 1999. The older end of this generation is now

experiencing their peak spending years, while the younger end is on their best way there (Lee, 2013). Lee (2013) also states that millennials are social creatures who like to share their experiences through social media and get inspired from others. Hence when it comes to millennial luxury travel marketing, social media a crucial tool to reach this generation.

From the side of the influencers, more and more are promoting the tourism industry as they want to travel to amazing places and deliver stunning pictures for their followers. When working with hotels influencers get some benefits for their work, these can be from discounts to full package hotel stays (Netherwood, 2014). Some hotels or destinations also offer car rentals and activities around the area (Shain, 2014). According to Kilian (2017) the influencers activities, accommodations and flights are usually covered by the hotel or destination.

4.6 PR Agencies and Influencer Marketing

Tourism destinations need media images, according to Jenkins (1999) most likely even more than services or goods in general. Especially when the reader has never been in contact with the destination, media representation and the so called “story telling” is highly important (Jenkins, 1999).

What PR does is giving a firm a reputation. The link between reputation and media coverage can be found in cultural and media studies (Cohen, 2002; Thomson, 1998). According to L’Etang, Falkheimer & Lugo (2007) in order to engage in relationships between hosts and tourists and issues like creating awareness of environmental problems, tourism depends a lot on PR practice. What a PR firm does when it comes to influencer marketing could also be described the way Sammis et al. (2016) describes it “the art and science of engaging people who are influential online to share brand massaging with their audiences in the form of sponsored content”.

4.7 Influencers and Sustainability

A definition that has gained global use describes the term sustainability in three dimensions: environmental, economic, and social. This more comprehensive definition is referred to as the “triple bottom line” Elkington (1997). Hence a sustainable consumer in the broader sense is a person whose purchase attitude and behavior is affected by one or more of these three ‘pillars’ (Gilg, Barr & Ford, 2005).

According to Haaren et al. (2005) social media and other web tools could encourage social education by promoting a new way of awareness creation through interacting with users and passing on information in a greater social context.

When looking at the hotel business, Craci and Kuehnel (2011) mentioned that nowadays there is a higher probability that hotel guests make sustainable lifestyle decisions as they are more aware of sustainability issues. According to Lee (2013) Millennials are concerned about social responsibility when travelling and next to experiencing new sites and enjoying local restaurants, they wish to contribute to the wellbeing of the citizens and the world. As social media plays a big role in the next generation, Influencers promoting sustainability could be a great input and step towards a more sustainable world.

5. METHODOLOGY

In order to explore how to enhance influencer marketing and for luxury hotels and PR agencies a qualitative approach was selected. Qualitative research provides the advantage of the richness of data gathered (Moretti et al., 2011). According to Silverman (1998) it also simplifies the understanding of a person's emotions, feelings and thoughts.

As influencer marketing as well as the tourism sector are based on emotions and feelings in-depth interviews were considered as a suitable data collecting method. Qualitative research is very useful in order to understand the purpose of a situation or an experience, as well as the complexity of an interpretation (Atieno, 2009). Influencer Marketing in the travel sector is all about experiences and hence a qualitative research method was considered as appropriate.

In order to enhance Influencer Marketing for the luxury tourism sector interviews with hotel managers and influencers were conducted. Two different types of interview guides were created. One for the hotel managers and one for the influencers. To interview both, the hotel managers and the influencers, opened the possibility to hear arguments from both sides and to find out if there are differences in the way they see the business of influencer marketing.

Concretely, 9 in-depth interviews, lasting 40 to 60 minutes were conducted. Five of the respondents were influencers and four were marketing managers of luxury hotels. The respondents have been chosen through the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where research participants recruit other respondents. Usually it is used when participants for a study are not easy to find (Noy, 2008).

The interviews were held personally or via Skype between August and September 2019. Consent forms were signed by participants and the interviewer, mentioning the purpose of the research and clarifying confidentiality matters. In order to respect privacy of the participants their names will not be disclosed. Regarding the data analysis, it is necessary to mention that there are only few studies who focus on influencer marketing (Woods, 2016; Evans et al., 2017; Bakshy et al., 2011; Ewers, 2017) and none of them focuses on luxury hotels which means the research was not guided by prior theories but by the data collected.

In order to analyze and interpret the data the computer-assisted software program Nvivo, which is a qualitative analysis tool, was used.

12. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Target Group Luxury Hotels want to reach through Influencer Marketing

As Wong (2014) stated, the challenge of influencer marketing is to identify and select the right influencer for the company, whom has a strong impact on their target group and to get the influencer to include their products in their posts.

In general almost all marketing directors stated that they want to reach the age group from 25 to 40 or older who are lifestyle and travel interested. By asking the influencers, who all have a focus on travel and luxury, the responses to the question of who their target group is quite matched the ones from the hotel managers. Respondent #2 for example

mentioned: “Between 25 and 35 if not older and as many male as female, even a little bit more male. Many of them have an interest in travelling, fashion, lifestyle and sports”.

Some of the interviewed influencers focus on a niche market. Gillin (2007) states that Influencers don’t have to have a huge visibility, if they are seen in exactly the niche that the company is aiming to reach, they can be the perfect fit for that brand.

6.2 Reasons Luxury Hotels do Influencer Marketing

The main reasons why marketers use influencer marketing are: enhancing brand endorsement; increasing brand awareness; attaining new target groups; growing share of voice (i.e., the online presence in percent compared to the competitors); and improved transformation into sales (Nanji, 2017). Respondent #8 a marketing director stated: “First of all, influencers are cheaper to advertise, then they gives more engagement – that’s what is very important nowadays – to engage people.”

Conducting the interviews another topic came up and also seemed to be very important, this was creativeness. Again Respondent #8 mentioned: “Influencers are getting very professional, they make new creative pictures and find new angles we don’t see anymore, that brings value to the resort”. For smaller properties the opportunity of getting good photo material also plays a role like respondent #6 mentioned: “Good influencers create unique content, which puts our property in a new light.

Nowadays many Luxury Hotels do influencer marketing in order to reach a relatively younger generation. Millennials are the generation born between 1980 and 1999. The older end of this generation is now experiencing their peak spending years, while the younger end is on their best way there (Lee, 2013). Millennials, who already in young years can set their preferences (independenthotelshow.co.uk, 2017). An influencer, respondent #3 described this quite well: “It is important because the generation that is using Instagram now is getting older. Also, young entrepreneurs are often willing to take a nice holiday. The lifestyle of people has changed. Now more and more people are willing to make more luxury travels to treat themselves”.

6.3 Finding Influencers

According to Mae Pan (2019) influencers can be found in four ways. The first option would be to search directly on Instagram, the second one is thru advanced search in google, the third one thru influencer platforms and the fourth one would be to use an app with a built-in influencer database and outreach. Typically influencer agencies help hotels, PR- or advertising agencies with the process of finding the right influencer. (Woods, 2016). Respondent #6 a marketing manager of a luxury hotel described: “ We don’t usually approach influencers ourselves. Our PR agents either reach out to interesting parties, or we get influencers reaching out to us directly through social media platforms or email. We usually get several requests a day“. Interestingly all marketing managers accentuated that they frequently get requests from influencers.

Most of the influencers base their requests to hotels on the destination. If they want to go to a certain place they send requests to hotels, like respondent #5 mentions: “If I’m going to some destination and I know there is a nice hotel where I can create some content then I would reach out to them.”

6.4 How Hotels can Trust Influencers

Mathew (2018) stated that unlike usual marketing strategies, for influencer marketing a high level of trust is required between the brand and the influencer. But how can this trust be created? When looking at it closely more than genuine trust, it is control that brings trust. Usually this is done by checking if a profile has fake followers, a real engagement rate, original content etc.. Most of the managers had similar ideas for evaluating if an influencer is trustworthy. Respondent #6 states: “We look at their past work with other brands and companies. If they have delivered on their posts in what looks like a timely manner, we know we can trust them. The way they approach us is also important. The influencers we work with have always been very professional and methodical in their approach”.

Some of the marketing managers use platforms in order to control if the data of the profiles are correct, like respondent #7: “We check on a special paid platform – there they calculate reach of course but mostly engagement rate and age of the followers as well as the country where they are from”.

6.5 The Value of an Influencer and how to measure it

When asking the influencers what value they bring to a company many different answers came up. Respondent #5 highlighted the use of blog posts: “Reach, a social media blog, high quality pictures. Especially the Blog posts are of great value for a company. They optimize the search engine, so hotels can be found much faster. Also, the posts are visible on for a very long time”. Two influencers emphasized the additional photo material and creativity they bring to a hotel, like respondent #2: “I create content for the hotel and I do the content on my own without having to commission anyone. They can also use the content afterwards. I usually deliver more than I need, because the hotel can use it for their website or for their social media channels”.

There are different views of the marketing managers about how to measure the value of an influencer. Some measure it the classical way like respondent #8 explains: “Over the reach, the engagement rate, minimum number of followers”. Respondent #6 measures the value through future bookings or increase of engagement on their websites: “It depends on what we are hoping to achieve through the particular collaboration. Generally speaking, we look at how many new followers we gain as well as whether we get a notable increase in engagement on our profiles. If there’s an increase in booking queries from their target audience, this is also a great signifier of a successful collaboration”. Respondent #7 had some different ideas of how to measure it: “By the quality of their content and relationship, by their engagement rate with their community and their relevancy to touch our target (content + age of followers). We could also give them promo shortcode or tracked link to measure return”. Some also completely gave up measuring as they stated it makes no sense.

6.6 How Hotels perceive influencers and how they can attract them

More and more influencers are promoting the tourism industry as they want to travel to amazing places and deliver stunning pictures for their followers (Christou, 2015). This statement of Christou (2015) explains very well the perspectives of the respondents. Respondent #2 stated: “I am interested in the place beforehand; read about the one or the other hotel; recommendations; make research. I also look at the hotel in advance - how is the hotel, does it suit me?”

Poll (2014) stated that 72 percent of millennials prefer rather than spending their money on material objects to spend it on experiences. The answer of Respondent #3 suits here well: "I am interested in places where I can experience something new, an adventure, luxury, anything special". A study by TripAdvisor in 2015, showed that millennial travelers are adventurous and engaged. In order to gain a new experience, they usually want to travel to places they have never visited before (Amaro, Henriques & Duarte, 2016).

When asking the hotel/marketing managers why influencers want to come to their resorts similar perspectives appeared, like respondent #7 mentions: "Beauty of the place to make 'instagrammable' photos and spend good time to show off on their social media".

Another interesting point was if influencers would change something in the way hotels treat them and on the other side if hotels would change something the way influencers behave.

Interestingly a lot of influencers had the same point. In their opinion the staff should be briefed about the work of influencers and treat them accordingly. Respondent #3 explains: "I think it's important to be treated in the hotel in a normal way, just like any other guests. In general I think the guests should always be treated well. I mean the guest is the king in hospitality. We always try hard to make the hotel look good, so I think the staff should not think in a negative way about influencers. That they think we travel all the time, try to get free stays and do nothing. They should be informed that we are there to help the hotel. But nowadays luckily more and more people know about the work of influencers".

It is important for companies to be authentic and giving influencers the freedom to be creative. Accordingly Respondent #2 states: "I wish the hotels would give the influencers more freedom. They shouldn't be too strict. The influencer is like an artist and the artist is creative and therefore you should let him have his freedoms. The hotels should also know that you are an influencer. They should care a bit more because you also deliver something. The employees should also be briefed about us. For example often we have to explain everything to the employees because they don't really understand the work of an influencer". As we can see the problem of briefing the staff about the work of influencers seems to be wide spread in the scene.

6.7 What Hotels offer Influencers and the other way round

Influencers of course get some benefits for their work, these can be from discounts to full package hotel stays (Netherwood, 2014). Some hotels or destinations also offer car rentals and activities around the area (Shain, 2014). According to Kilian (2017) the influencers activities, accommodations and flights are usually covered by the hotel or destination. Correspondingly a marketing manager, respondent #6 mentions: "We offer complimentary accommodation for a short stay, usually 3-4 nights. We also offer complimentary return transfers, F&B, and a selection of experiences that would allow them opportunities to create the kind of content we want".

When asking influencers what hotels should offer them in order to visit the hotel they mainly focused on one point which was the question of time. Respondent #4 argued: "We need three days minimum if we want to create good content. They offer us the stay, the meals (half-board), sometimes also the journey and flights. Or inland flights if you want to go to other places. It also depends on how much media coverage the hotel expects from us".

In contrary Influencers offer them their service. Respondent #2 offers: “blog posts, Instagram stories and postings. And I also do little videos sometimes”. Respondent #5 states: “Posts and stories and sometimes hotel want images that I make for them and they post them as if they have made them”.

6.8 Contracts

When asking the influencers how they consider the contracts they make with the hotels there was not one that was unhappy with them. Mostly they use written agreements instead of a real contract, like respondent #3 mentions: “I make written agreements with them. I get the booking confirmation and the company gets the security that I post stuff”. From the side of the hotel they seemed to have exactly the same attitudes, like respondent #9 states: “Mostly those agreements are only via Email and that’s fine”. Respondent #6 also prefers a more informal way of doing contracts mentioning as a reason trust: “We don’t make contracts, we prefer to have a more informal understanding. We feel that this allows us to build a stronger relationship based on mutual trust”.

6.9 The Importance of Sustainability for Influencers and Hotels

Nowadays there is an increase in consumers environmental awareness (Kalafatis, Pollard, East & Tsogas, 1999). The question is if Hotels guests also care about sustainability in an hotel and if yes, do the hotels consider the influencers lifestyle/sustainable actions when choosing them? From the side of the influencer it was explored if they care about sustainability in general and how their followers perceive this topic.

According to Craci and Kuehnel (2011) nowadays there is a higher probability that hotel guests make sustainable lifestyle decisions as they are more aware of sustainability issues. Their choices, whether at home or while traveling go from driving fuel-efficient vehicles and recycling to consuming organic food. However, apart from the growing interest in sustainability, it doesn’t seem to be a criteria when choosing a hotel for most of the guests. Decisions are rather made on the location, services and amenities Barber & Deale (2013). When asking the hotel/marketing managers if their guests care about sustainability, all answers were quite positive. Against the statement of Barber & Deale (2013) respondent #6 announced: “The vast majority of them do, yes. There is a global trend of eco-awareness, and guests are becoming more and more discerning when it comes to their travel choices”.

At the same time the influencers were asked if their followers care about sustainability. Respondent #2 commented: “Yes, definitely, I keep noticing it. I travel a lot and fly a lot and traveling in itself is not the most sustainable think you can do. There I get feedback from time to time of people asking, if I actually think about the environment and why I have to fly so much and if I couldn't travel in a different way”. In general millennials are considered to be more conscious when it comes to social, environmental and cultural topics (Sheahan, 2005).

When asking the influencers there is an understanding for sustainability but not as deep as it could or maybe even should be nowadays. Paludan (2015) stated that the biggest challenge towards a sustainable development is the fact that people don’t understand the term sustainability. She explained that this is an educational and cultural problem arising by the lack of education and the decreasing understanding of the natural system that enables a life on earth.

6.10 Future of Influencer Marketing

According to Haapasalmi (2017) whom did a study of how advertisers see the future of influencer marketing in Finland, 86% of marketers are planning to do influencer marketing for their brands in the next three years with 68% of advertisers increasing or keeping their current budget for influencer marketing. So, the study predicts influencer marketing to continue in the future, 82% of advertisers believe it will even play a greater role in their total marketing efforts.

a general tendency towards fewer, niche influencers with a high quality of content is predicted by the respondents of the interviews. Tiautrakul & Jindakul (2019) also stated that Micro influencers are going to have more importance in the future as those influencers might be more trusted by their followers.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1. STRATEGY FORMULATION

After analyzing the company and conducting research with key stakeholders, this thesis will suggest strategies in order to offer a solution for the problems detected. First of all, strategic alternatives will be formulated, secondly, the proposed alternatives will be evaluated and finally, the most suitable alternatives will be chosen.

7.1.1 Strategic Alternatives

First Issue

The first issue detected is related to the problems the PR agency has when working with influencers. It contains the points of finding the right influencers; reliability/trust of an influencer and measuring the value of an influencer. A strategic alternative here will be to create a website where the procedure of finding influencers will be made much easier for all participants with a lot of advantages packed into one tool.

After the research made, we can see that finding influencers is either made through searching on social media, connections or websites that match influencers and businesses. However, the first two options are quite inefficient and considering the website, they are not as easy to handle and useful as they could be.

For this reason, a possibility would be to create a website for Hotels (or their PR Agencies) and influencers, where the search of each other is made as easy and efficient as possible. The idea is to use a platform similar to Booking.com which is open for every user until a certain point of the search, which will be explained later. When opening the website there are two search fields in the beginning. One search field states 'Influencers' the other one 'Hotels'. Influencers as well as the Hotels can create a profile on that website. The profile could be imagined similar as a Facebook profile with all the details needed. When entering the search field 'Influencers', various filters will be available in order to specify the search. Same appears when entering the search field 'Hotels'.

HOMEPAGE

INFLUENCERS

Filters:

- Follower (min)
- Engagement Rate
- Age of Influencer
- Target Group
- Rating from Hotels
- Niche Market Influencers

HOTELS

Filters:

- Location
- Type of Hotel
- Stars
- Conditions
- Instagrammability
- Rating from Influencers

After adding all the filters needed a search process will start and the suiting Influencers/Hotels will be listed. From here on the path of the search process of the Influencers will be followed, as for hotels it is quite logical and similar to hotel booking websites. So, the list of influencers is shown. What can be seen is a profile photo, a name and a short description of the focus of the influencers. If Hotels are further interested, they will have to log-in, in order to see more details. The reason for the late log-in process is to allow hotels to see if there could be interesting influencers for them. Until now no other influencer search website enables this. However, the log-in process is an important step in order to gain some profit out of it. Otherwise, Hotels could just search influencers through that tool and then contact them directly. This could still be the case now, as the name is shown, however, there are very valuable information for Hotels available when logging in, so many clients might do it.

LIST OF INFLUENCERS

Profile Photo



Name

Short description of focus



Name

Short description of focus



Name

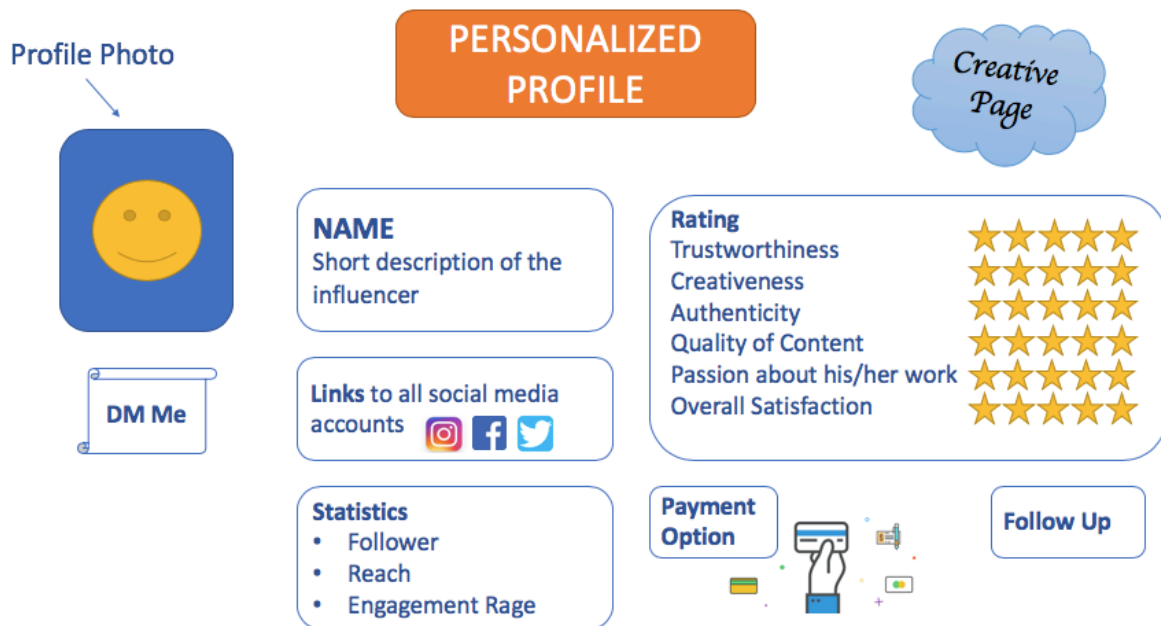
Short description of focus

For further information
log-in necessary

After the client has logged-in, and has its personal account as well as chosen a rate he wishes to pay (trial rate, one month, monthly...) he can continue to explore the data of the influencers. By clicking on one of the listed influencers a profile will appear. Like mentioned before the profile could be similar to a Facebook profile, only that the influencer can unfold his creativity at this page and design his own profile as personalized as possible.

Nevertheless, the greatest value of this page lies in the content. First of all there will be a short description of the influencer. There will also be a tool to message the influencer directly (DM) and links to all social media accounts and blogs will be given. Statistics of Followers, reach, and engagement rate will be shown too. After all, the most important feature of this page will be the ratings. Hotels can rate the influencers in various sections: trustworthiness/reliability, creativeness, authenticity, quality of content, passion about his/her work, and overall satisfaction. All these points have been discussed in the interviews and turned out to be difficult information to get. So, a rating like this will make the whole influencer business more transparent as well as efficient. Efficient because like this not much further research will have to be done.

There could also be included a payment option, that allows the hotels to pay the influencers (if agreed on this) for their work via that specific link. Finally this page could also include a 'follow up' button. This button helps, when a collaboration with the influencer is done, to follow up all posts of the influencer that are marked with the hotels name or hashtag.



Second Issue

The second issue detected is directly related to hotels and consists in the question of how to make the hotel an attractive place for influencers. The interviews gave a clear picture why managers want influencers in their hotels or why they use influencer marketing.

First of all Influencers want to experience something when travelling. It could be something new or an adventure, actually anything that is special. Hence hotels (or the PR Agencies for the Hotels) should investigate in what experiences they can offer. Each hotel has it's opportunities to offer unique experiences, they just have to find them.

Coming to the next point: 'instagrammability', a word that is in the center of attention of Influencers. They mostly look for places where they can take stunning photos that are worth posting on their Instagram account. So what hotels could do is to create a unique interior design, that is trendy or stylish and like this lure the influencers to their hotel. The last point to attract influencers is a very important one. It consists in the briefing of employees about the work of an influencers. First of all, the manager should be briefed about the influencers. How they work, what he can expect, what they need in order to do their work professionally and in general how to treat them

Third Issue

The third issue relates to sustainability. As influencer marketing is such a powerful tool it should be used for something more meaningful. Influencers promote sustainability issues on their accounts.

In order to encourage spreading this important subjects, when contracting the influencers, a part of the contract (whether it's written by Email or any other way) should contain to post at least one post and one story during their stay about sustainability.

To create awareness through influencers who focus on the luxury hotel sector could be a great way to reach people who don't focus that much on sustainability.

7.1.2. Alternative Evaluation

First Issue

for finding the right influencers efficiently Schaffelhuber Communications could use one of the existing platforms to search for influencers. Until now the company is searching on Instagram or finds influencers via connections, however working with a professional platform could help finding influencers faster. Moreover, it could help to identify the right influencers, with the right target group faster and make sure there are no fake followers.

Second Issue

The second issue concerned hotels and how they can attract influencers. To the choices mentioned above an alternative could be the strategy of change. As influencers are constantly searching for new material to post, hotels could try to constantly change something. Which means trying to constantly create new things in the hotel or constantly changing existing things. For example adding new parts to the hotel, creating new uses of rooms, changing design, or constantly changing striking decorations. Like in the interviews said, it doesn't have to be a significant change but it should be something to talk about or it should have a story to tell.

Third Issue

An alternative to the first solution could be, not to state in the contract that influencers have to deliver one post and one story, but offering incentives for the influencers if they post something on that topic. Some hotels might not want to interfere in the creative process of the influencers and let them do their work and post whatever they feel like posting. Also, for some influencers it might be a point that they are not sure about and they might not want to agree to such a contract. In this case to work with incentives could be a great solution.

7.1.3. Alternative Choice

Issue	Alternative I	Alternative II	Selected Solution
Finding the right influencers efficiently; reliability/trust of an influencer & measuring the value of an influencer	Creating an inovative website that solves all three problems and could bring revenue in the future	Use an existing platform to find trustworthy influencers and measures their value	Alternative I
How to make hotels attractive places for influencers	Create experiences for influencers; finding 'instagrammable' places; briefing employees	The strategy of change	Alternative I
Promoting sustainability through Influencers	Stating in the contract the demand of one post and one story about the topic sustainability	Offering incentives for influencers if they post about sustainability	Alternative I

7.2. STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Action	Responsible	Timeframe	Butjet
Creating a new Website	Outsource – IT professional	4 weeks	€ 5.000,-
Designing experiences for influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	4 weeks	€ 2.500,-
Highlighting 'instagrammability'	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	2 weeks	€ 1.250,-
Briefing employees about the work of influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the	2 weeks	€ 1.250,-

	GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel		
Promoting sustainability through Influencers	Each PR Manager who is responsible for his client (Hotel) together with the GM or Marketing Manager of the Hotel	1 weeks	€ 625,-

7.3. STRATEGY EVALUATION

Results regarding the attractiveness of the hotel for influencers will be evaluated through anonymous online questionnaires that will be provided to the influencers at the end of each stay. The questionnaire will cover aspects like the satisfaction of experiences, evaluation of the 'instagrammability' of the hotel and awareness and treatment of the employees. Aspects that have been listed in the interviews regarding influencers and their stays at hotels. These questionnaires will be evaluated by Schaffelhuber Communications and the relevant feedback will be given to the hotel/marketing managers.

Results of the efficient search through the new website can be evaluated through the amount of activity on the website. The evaluation of awareness creation of sustainability by influencers will be harder. However, a questionnaire could be handed to the hotel guests, asking questions like if they knew before booking that the hotel did sustainable actions and where they got the information from. The evaluation of this questionnaire can be done by the hotel.

7.4. CONCLUSION

One of the main conclusions achieved in this paper is that influencer marketing still plays a huge role for all kind of businesses and that there is a trend towards a growing interest for influencer marketing in the future. A very important part of the conclusions achieved is the impact of influencer marketing. It can reach far more people than any advertising strategy could reach ever before. Brand awareness is encouraged by the fact that influencer marketing engages people through communication. People trust influencers much more than they trust traditional advertisements which again raises brand endorsement.

I believe that if my suggestions are implemented. Schaffelhuber Communications will be able to offer a much more efficient service to their clients. In some points they could even be innovators and in other points they could have an impact on millions of people. Moreover, it could be a possibility to further enhance their personal reputation around the business.

Finally, this experience dramatically impacted my view on how advertisement works nowadays. It showed me that social media is changing the world rapidly and completely new rules emerge. Hence, we have to be fast in adapting in order to stay relevant.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

It is important to mention that the current study is not without limitations. Firstly, only 9 people were selected for the interviews. After all, the results may not represent the entire luxury industry for influencers as well as for hotels. Future research should approach a larger sample in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the situation. Generalization could be another concern as several problems were identified regarding search, identification, measurement, trust, and behavior of influencers.

The sample of hotel/marketing managers represent luxury hotels that mostly are located very well. These locations are ideal for influencers as they have beautiful landscapes and are often quite exotic. It is unknown whether the responses regarding influencer marketing would be different from other hotels that don't have such good locations. Furthermore, the sample of influencers mostly represent those influencers that have been since many years in the business. Again here, it would be interesting to interview newcomers and see if the results would be the same.

Future studies may explore further on the topic of practical ways to find influencers or the best ways to search and identify the right influencers on social media for businesses. As in this study hotel/marketing managers were interviewed as well as influencers, it could be interesting to interview professionals from influencer searching platforms or larger PR agencies. An opportunity for future research is the topic of measuring the value of an influencer. Existing literature and the interviews couldn't give a satisfying solution to this problem. As this measurement is so intangible, new ways are to be explored.

10.5. Ethics Form

Ethics Form

Risk checklist – Please answer ALL the questions in each of the sections below.

Risk category 1	Yes	No
Use any information OTHER than that which is freely available in the public domain?		X
Involve analysis of pre-existing data which contains sensitive or personal information?		X
Involve direct and/or indirect contact with human participants?	X	
Require consent to conduct?	X	
Require consent to publish?	X	
Have a risk of compromising confidentiality?	X	
Have a risk of compromising anonymity?	X	
Involve risk to any party, including the researcher?	X	
Contain elements which you OR your supervisor are NOT trained to conduct?		X
Risk Category 2		
Require informed consent OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain to conduct the research?		X
Require informed consent OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain to publish the research?		X
Require information to be collected and/or provided OTHER than that which is straightforward to obtain?		X
Risk category 3		
Involve participants who are particularly vulnerable?		X
Involve participants who are unable to give informed consent?		X
Involve data collection taking place BEFORE consent form is given?		X
Involve any deliberate cover data collection?		X
Involve risk to the researcher or participants beyond that experienced in everyday life?		X
Cause (or could cause) physical or psychological negative consequences?		X
Use intrusive or invasive procedures?		X
Include a financial incentive to participate in the research?		X

IF APPLICABLE:

List agreed actions with your tutor to be taken to address issues raised in questions Risk Category 2:

Student Declaration: I confirm that I will undertake the research thesis as detailed above. I understand that I must abide by the terms of this approval and that I may not make any substantial amendments to the research thesis without further approval. Name: Y. S. S. S. S. Signed: [Signature]
 Date: 22.11.2019

Agreement from the supervisor of the student:
 Name: [Signature] Signed: 11/11/19 Date: [Signature]

Risk Category 1: If you answered NO to all the above questions, your study is classified as Risk Category 1.

- The supervisor can give immediate approval for the research thesis.
- A copy of this signed form MUST be included in the Research Thesis.

Risk Category 2: If you answered YES only to questions in Risk Category 1 and/or 2.

- You must meet with your supervisor and clarify how the issues encountered are going to be dealt.
- Once clarified, the actions taken must be stated in the form. Then the supervisor can guarantee approval for the research thesis.
- A copy of this signed form MUST be included in the Research Thesis.

Risk Category 3: If you answered YES to questions included in Risk Category 3.

- You must discuss with your supervisor how to re-direct the research thesis to avoid risks mentioned in Category 3.
- You must complete the Ethical Form again until Risk Category 1 or 2 is obtained. A copy of this signed form MUST be included in the Research Thesis.