Facebook Adoption by Australian Small Tourism Enterprises (STEs): Business Requirements and User Perceptions

By

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DECLARATION

I, Isaac (Itzhak) Mizrachi, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Social Media Implementation by Australian STEs: Business Requirements and User Perceptions* is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

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ABSTRACT

Social media has been developed as a Web 2.0 innovation since the early 2000s and has become a significant platform allowing people and businesses to interact, engage and build relationships. Small tourism enterprises (STEs) have started to use social media by building an online presence, with Facebook being a primary platform for adoption. The literature on social media adoption by STEs is limited – with this recent innovation being at an early stage of uptake. Therefore, the early adopters of this relatively new phenomenon can provide important insights regarding how social media can be used.

This research investigated a set of Australian accommodation STEs that were deemed to be early adopters of Facebook as a marketing platform so as to document their perceptions of using social media. As the participating STEs were considered early adopters of social media, the study sought to reveal the ways in which they adopted this recent innovation. This provided an understanding of how and why Facebook was being used by those STEs, allowing important practices to be identified, as well as what were perceived as challenges. The early adopters are an important group that can provide pertinent examples for other industry-based entities when it comes to a recent innovation – where they might emulate adoption practices, learn from, or even reject the innovation.

The research also captured the perceptions of the Facebook fans or users that were followers of the STEs. Users have different reasons for participating in the social media sphere, either actively by posting new material online or passively via following other conversations. Therefore, the perceptions of users with regard to STEs' Facebook presence is an important contribution to the study in that it brings to light issues related to user experience and satisfaction.

The study used a qualitative approach to collect and analyse the data in two phases. In the first phase, the perceptions of the STEs were captured in a set of eight in-depth case studies that used operator/manager interviews, their Facebook presence, and ancillary sources to document their perceptions of adopting the Facebook social media platform. In the second phase, user or fan perceptions of the STEs' Facebook pages were captured through open-ended questionnaires that were enabled through the cooperation of the STEs. Furthermore, twelve months of comments and responses posted by fans on the STEs' Facebook pages were also used to support this component of the study.

The findings of the research identified similarities in the way that both STEs and the users perceive Facebook as a marketing platform for the STE accommodation businesses. On the other hand, the research found significant limitations in the social media knowledge and skills STEs possessed, including the manner in which they interpreted the main function and goals of having a Facebook presence. In general, STEs were found to be overly experimental with their Facebook maintenance, which assisted them in exploring the business benefits of Facebook and, in particular, promoting their business in an affordable way. However, the same spontaneity led to the above-mentioned limitations.

The study proposed an implementation model for Facebook adoption by accommodation STEs. Two anchors form the model: one being the strategy of Facebook adoption and the other addressing the availability of resources and skills related to Facebook adoption. Measuring STE performance on Facebook is another interactive component of the model.

The research portrays a representational picture of early adopting accommodation STEs and their use of the Facebook social media platform and sets the foundations for future research. The proposed implementation model can be used to further explore Facebook adoption amongst the cohort of Australian accommodation STEs. Notably, the model proposed and the findings can be used in researching other types of STEs, both in Australia and in other destinations. Although premised on the Facebook social media platform, the proposed implementation model can be potentially extended to other forms of social media platforms.

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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The global tourism industry has been described as information intensive, where access to relevant information allows tourists to make useful decisions regarding their vacations (Burgess, Sellitto & Karansios 2012). The internet, per se, provides a wide variety of supporting innovations that intensify business activities and is a central platform in this information search and access. Web 2.0 is one of these innovations, and reflects websites that incorporate stronger user interactivity and advanced functionality, of which social media platforms are a representative entity (Bingley et al. 2010). In particular, a growing number of tourism businesses are demonstrating interest in the benefits of using social media as a means to support business activities, such as advertising or promoting tourism products including hotel rooms or destinations (Leung et al. 2013; Hays, Page & Buhalis 2012; Murphy & Nolly 2012; Dev, Buschman & Bowen 2010).

Although there are numerous definitions of social media, this study defines social media as a unique Web 2.0 innovation that provides a platform to 'meet people and one that enables users to articulate and make visible their social networks … This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made ...' (Boyd & Ellisson 2008, p. 211). Indeed, social media platforms encourage the production of electronic user generated content (UGC), a phenomenon that represents the shift between traditional marketing to an open conversation model (Xiang & Gretzel 2010). Therefore, it has the potential to create new business opportunities where the engagement of clients tends to be direct and informal (Roblek et al. 2013; Turban & Volonino 2011). Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that the centrality of social media as a platform used in the process for acquiring new business clients should not be ignored, believing that it should be part of the fundamental integrated marketing communications structure of an organisation.

Small tourism enterprises (STEs), which are broadly equivalent to SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) are divided into several industry categories such as firms that focus on sites of interest, those that are involved in accommodation and those that are active in recreation – each category having its special characteristics and operation methods (Reichel & Haber 2005). These businesses promote tourism spending and produce a wide array of tourism products, which helps with improving the local economy (Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler 2004). Furthermore, STEs usually adopt a product approach and focus on short-term

sales goals rather than trying to analyse the overall market and its requirements – a direct contrast to the big tourism enterprises that are long-term planners. However, they have their unique organisational patterns and tend to react faster than large tourism enterprises to changes in operational and industry conditions. Australian STEs that comprise between 90–95% of all tourism enterprises in the country find it challenging to adopt new technologies (Davidson et al. 2006). In this study, the term STEs will refer to small tourism accommodation providers rather than the broader industry groups. Furthermore, STEs in this study are Australian small business entities that by definition employ no more than 20 employees (Monday, Burgess et al. 2009), with accommodation being the primary product they offer. The researcher chose to focus on STEs in this study due to their size and centrality in the Australian tourism industry, as indicated above.

The businesses examined in this thesis can be regarded as the early adopters of social media amongst Australian small accommodation providers. The social media platform that is used in this study is Facebook, which is the most widely used social media site amongst business enterprises (Efrati 2010). Innovation adoption theory suggests that different levels of innovativeness define the timing and degree to which a person adopts a new concept or idea. In his theory, Rogers (2003) portrays the early adopters as people who feel more comfortable with technology and who look for ways to improve their business. According to Rogers, these early adopters assist with minimising the uncertainty of an innovation or a new idea and provide relevant examples of how to use such recent innovations – particularly amongst their peer group.

As indicated previously, STEs tend to suffer from ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) adoption difficulties. These small firms tend to embrace a product-oriented approach instead of examining their position within the entire market, and as such, might be unaware of the perceived benefits of newly emerging innovations such as social media. Indeed, social media as a relatively new ICT innovation is not an exception, with only 27% of Australian small businesses using it for operational purposes in 2012 (Sensis 2012).

Users hold different reasons for participating in the social media sphere, either actively by posting new materials online or passively via following other conversations. Two important influences for users to be active in the social media domain and Facebook, in particular, include enjoyment (Lin & Lu 2011) and social surveillance (Joinson 2008). Users have their own unique reasons for uploading content into a social media platform, sharing an item with

friends, or commenting on it (Brzozowski et al. 2009). Therefore, this study explores the STEs presence on Facebook and the feedback of their real Facebook fans (that is, the users) to answer two overarching research questions that relate to: how and why STEs have implemented the Facebook social media platform and what are the perceptions of the STEs' fans of their social media presences.

Two conceptual areas emerged for directing the research and were associated with user or fan perceptions of social media, as well as the elements that influenced adoption practices of Australian STEs in using social media. The conceptual area associated with user perceptions was found to be connected to the expectations that users had when using social media – their expectations relating to factors such as functional and hedonic benefits. The researcher assumed that the wide range of STE Facebook pages in this study would be perceived differently by users – perceptions reflecting the benefits and expectations of visiting the Facebook site. The second conceptual area used to direct the study related to STE social media adoption that included constructs that reflected STE adoption features associated with their ability to develop a Facebook strategy; their skills and resources for maintaining a Facebook page; and finally, the business benefits associated with Facebook usage.

1.2 Research Objectives

Clearly, the adoption of social media by smaller enterprises is at an early stage with a relatively low uptake rate. As with any recent innovation, understanding the methods through which Australian accommodation STEs can use social media and the subsequent benefit from it is desirable, and can be explored from an early adopter perspective. Hence, this study documents the adoption of the leading social media platform (Facebook) by Australian accommodation STEs in order to understand how and why it can be used for business purposes. The study also captures the perceptions of a group of the STE fans with regard to their expectations when using the STE's Facebook page. The findings assist with developing an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs that can serve as encouragement for non-adopters to examine the potential of using Facebook to achieve their own business goals, as well as encourage late-adopters to re-examine their social media presence with regard to Facebook implementation. Hence, the two main research objectives addressed in this study are:

1. How and why is Facebook being used by Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of social media? Notably, STEs have started using Facebook for business purposes,

similar to larger tourism firms (Leung et al. 2013; Hays, Page & Buhalis 2012; Murphy & Nolly 2012; Dev, Buschman & Bowen 2010). These STEs are early adopters of the Facebook social media platform and are important in the diffusion of new ideas and innovations amongst industry peers and groups (Rogers 2003). Social media and Facebook as a Web 2.0 platform can be viewed as a recent innovation that both businesses and people are adopting. Hence, the focus on the early adopters can bring to light issues related to Facebook implementation and usage, which may assist non-adopters with their sales and marketing efforts.

2. What are the users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented a social media presence through the Facebook platform? Social media users have different motivations for being active on the various online platforms (Lin & Lu 2011; Joinson 2008; Brzozowski et al. 2009). Therefore, investigating fan or user perceptions related to using the Facebook presence implemented by the early adopting STEs will identify the issues that in this study will focus on user experience and satisfaction. As such, the capture of these perceptions allows the researcher to capture fan views on the STE's social media presence.

1.3 An Overview of the Research Method and Approaches Used

To investigate the proposed research questions, the researcher used a qualitative approach. The research included three main stages: the first stage, which is grounded in the literature, developed a conceptual framework that was used to direct the research. The conceptual framework also assisted in providing a guide for developing an implementation model that provides the foundation for STEs to adopt the Facebook social media. The next two stages focused on the target audiences for this research: the STEs and their Facebook users.

Social media can address different aspects of public relations and marketing, through to social recruitment and corporate social responsibility (Guarda 2011). For this reason, case studies were selected as the research approach to allow a holistic investigation of the STEs and their adoption of Facebook. This research adopts a descriptive case study approach as it depicts the phenomenon (that is, social media adoption by STEs) and the situation in which it occurred. In order to provide an overview of the social media strategies used by STEs, a set of multiple case studies were chosen rather than a single overarching case. The composition of the case studies used multiple data sources that included semi-structured interviews and an examination of the STE's Facebook presence. The semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eight STE owners/managers were conducted in order to capture perceptions associated with

Facebook adoption. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to enjoy a higher degree of freedom and flexibility, as they tend to generalise the process of creating new research ideas and insights, thus encouraging diversion from the planned group of questions to understand the important participant issues (Bryman 2004). In addition to interviewing the owners/managers, the researcher learned about the background of the participating STEs by visiting their official websites and reviewing their Facebook pages in order to identify aspects of Facebook presence to inform the questions that could be asked during the interviews with the STE managers.

The researcher also examined the user experience and effectiveness of the STEs' Facebook pages using the opinion of their real fans. Hence, the study captured user perceptions of the STEs' Facebook presence using an online questionnaire that was completed by fans after being advised on the business' Facebook pages. Open-ended questions were developed based on the section in the conceptual framework related to user perceptions of social media. Follow-up interviewing of STE fans over the phone allowed further data to be collected.

Thematic analysis was the approach used to analyse the cases studies and fan responses. This form of analysis allows the researchers to look for important themes that emerged from the data that are deemed important to describing the phenomenon under investigation (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman 1997). The study applied theory-driven thematic analysis, where the researcher utilises the current literature and relevant constructs as a basis for the development of new themes (Howitt 2010). A set of themes was identified from the STE case studies and another set of themes from the data collected form fan responses. The identified themes were documented and compared to the literature. These newly identified themes constituted the foundations of informing the proposed implementation model.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is presented in eight chapters. Below is a brief overview of each chapter:

Chapter One provides an overview of the thesis: it describes the background of the study, the research objectives, including the problem statement and the different methods used.

Chapter Two covers the academic literature of the research area and sets the ground for the development of the conceptual framework used to investigate STE Facebook presences. The literature covered includes the Web 2.0 phenomenon, social media marketing, early adopter

theory, information and communication technology (ICT) use by STEs, and the accommodation industry in Australia.

Chapter Three provides a description of the research methodology. The chapter begins with an introduction to qualitative research, discusses case studies and online questionnaires as the main research methods used to collect data, and then explains the research design in detail. In addition, it presents the conceptual framework that acts as the basis for developing an STE implementation model for Facebook adoption. The conceptual framework serves as a tool for presenting the data collected.

Chapter Four presents the case studies that were collated following the STE data collection phase. Interviews with STE managers and owners were the main source from which the cases were developed, in addition to ancillary supporting documentation from the business website and the examination of the STE's Facebook presence. Overall, the chapter presents eight case studies of Australian accommodation STEs that are early adopters of Facebook and summarises key adoption issues and/or patterns.

Chapter Five provides thematic analysis of the case studies presented in the previous chapter. The researcher coded the data based on four theoretical themes from the conceptual framework. The themes are: Strategy, Resources, ICT Skills, and Business Benefits. Thematic analysis enabled further insight to be gained on the adoption of the Facebook platform by STEs. These new insights serve as the STE contribution to the implementation model for Facebook usage, which is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Six presents the findings of the second data collection through thematic analysis of user perceptions to STE Facebook pages. Its goal is to answer the second research question of this study, which examines users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented a Facebook presence. Expectations from social media, as well as the benefits of social media usage, were the two main themes that directed the coding process. The findings serve as the user contribution to the implementation model for Facebook usage, which is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven discusses the findings of the study with regard to proposing an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. It integrates the findings from the previous data collection stages and re-visits the conceptual

framework to incorporate the sub-themes identified. The updating of the framework laid the basis for proposing an implementation model for Facebook adoption.

Chapter Eight summarises the thesis, highlights its contribution to knowledge, and explains its limitations. It also suggests directions for future research in the area of STEs and social media business activities such as marketing.

1.5 Summary

The chapter provided an introduction to the current study of Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. It presented the research background, the study's objectives, and the methods used, giving an overview of the chapters included in the thesis.

Understanding the experiences of early adopting STEs on why and how they use Facebook, as well as the users' perceptions of these Facebook presences is at the core of this study. The findings of this research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the field of social media marketing. It may also encourage late-adopter STEs to use Facebook to achieve their business objectives, as well as lead to improved implementation of social media by those STEs.

The next chapter will review the relevant literature in the fields of social media, early adopters, and the Australian tourism industry, to form a conceptual framework that will direct the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The advent of Web 2.0 has been a significant internet-based phenomenon, allowing users to participate more easily in the creation of online products – from web content to technological innovations (O'Reilly 2005; Lin 2007). Social media has been developed as a Web 2.0 innovation since the early 2000s, with websites such as MySpace, Twitter and Facebook. These platforms have increased word of mouth marketing due to their viral nature, and therefore became a central element in the marketing strategy of many organisations worldwide. What started as tools for communication, quickly transformed into business platforms where brands try to strengthen their public awareness, improve services and sell products (Roblek et al. 2013; Turban & Volonino 2011; Mangold & Faulds 2009).

Facebook has grown significantly since its inception in 2004 as a closed social network for students at Harvard University, and became the world's most popular social media site with almost one billion registered users as of 2012. The business world has adopted Facebook as an important business and marketing tool providing benefits associated with affordable advertising and broad reach due to its popularity (Stay 2008; Driscoll 2009; Crum 2009). The tourism industry, which includes hotels, airlines and destination marketing organisations, maintain brand pages on Facebook in an effort to promote and sell tourism products such as hotel rooms, flight tickets and destinations (Leung et al. 2013; Hays, Page & Buhalis 2012; Murphy & Nolly 2012; Dev, Buschman et al. 2010).

The literature review starts with providing background on the advent of Web 2.0, followed by a detailed explanation of social media and its wide range of definitions and forms. Some important industry terms related to social media are clarified, before highlighting Facebook as the central social network that is the focus of this study. The chapter also discusses the issues related to social media consumption that include user (or fan) perceptions of using social media, through to social media as a marketing tool and social media good practices. Lastly, the literature review focuses on the use of ICT by the tourism industry and Australian STEs in particular, not before covering issues related to early adopters and their unique characteristics.

A knowledge gap has led to the creation of the research questions in this study, which examine how social media is being used by its early adopters amongst Australian

accommodation STEs, as well as the perceptions that potential tourists have on these STEs. The chapter develops a conceptual framework from the literature that is used to subsequently investigate the early adopters (STE) of social media and the perceptions of social media adoption by fans.

2.2 Web 2.0: Background and Definitions

The internet began in 1967, when Lawrence Roberts published his plan for the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET), a digital packet-switching network that allows data communication. The internet, in its commercial phase, started with the development of HTML and HTTP by Berners-Lee and Cailliau, which enabled the creation of 'a vast cross-referenced collection of multimedia documents' (p. 18), also called the World Wide Web (Mowery, Simcoe 2002). Provisor (2009) describes the commercial transition of the World Wide Web from Electronic Commerce, where merchants used the internet to sell a bigger variety of products in a faster and easier manner than in brick-and-mortar stores; to Social Commerce, where user generated content created communities of consumers who discuss products and purchases; and finally to Collective Commerce, where a group of online consumers can join together to secure a deal with the retailer. The last two terms (Social Commerce and Collective Commerce) are elements of Web 2.0, which arguably reflects evolution of the internet beyond being a platform for website implementation.

O'Reilly (2005) was the first to coin the term Web 2.0 and to define the emerging online phenomenon, which offered richer user experiences compared with the static page metaphor of Web 1.0. In his article, he compares familiar web-related terms and tools in order to visualise the differences between the Web 1.0–2.0 periods, where he suggested that in the Web 2.0 period, companies can focus on providing services rather than software, provide more trust in users' content contributions and simplify user interfaces.

The differences between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 features are noted in Table 2.0. For instance, personal websites became popular on a global scale in the mid–90s (Miura, Yamashita 2007). The authors suggest that two forms of personal websites dominated the web:

- Those who focused completely on the website's owner and served as a stage for his or her personality, achievements and interests.
- Those that offered interaction activities with other users by embedding a chat room.

The shift to a Web 2.0 environment is evident in the development of blogs. Blogs, a Web 2.0 phenomenon according to O'Reilly (2005), evolved from a chat room activity and combined the dimensions of not only presenting one's views, but also interacting with the audience (Miura, Yamashita 2007). According to Nardi, Schiano el al. (2004), blogs attract different user motivations and present a large variety of content styles. Taxonomy, another Web 1.0 phenomenon according to O'Reilly (2005), is the classification of elements hierarchically, usually controlled by the designer of the web system (Christiaens, 2006). The Web 2.0 feature of folksonomy (which is analogous to taxonomy in Web 1.0), on the other hand, can be done by anyone who uses the system, and leads to the creation of conceptual structures (Hotho, Jäschke et al. 2006). Lin (2007) defines Web 2.0 websites as participation enablers, using technologies such as Ajax, CSS and Flash to strengthen the democratic quality of the web. Some of the common Web 2.0 applications include blogs, wikis, RSS and social bookmarking, with social media as an important addition (Wirtz, Piehler & Ullrich 2013; Tung & Chien-Liang 2010; Constantinides & Fountain 2008). Hoegg, Martignoni et al. (2006) propose that Web 2.0 is not a technology but rather a philosophy, which is grounded in the shared contributions of its participants. According to the authors, these contributions are the collective intelligence of users, and the goal of all Web 2.0 tools is to mutually maximise this intelligence. Table 2 lists Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 features, as observed by Tim O'Reilly (2005).

Table 2.0: Tim O'Reilly's comparison between Web 1.0 and 2.0 features (O'Reilly 2005)

Web 1.0 Features	Web 2.0 Features
DoubleClick	Google Adsense
Ofoto	Flickr
Akamai	BitTorrent
MP3.com	Napster
Britannica Online	Wikipedia
Personal websites	Blogging
Evite	Upcoming.org and EVDB

Domain name speculation	Search engine optimisation
Page views	Cost Per Click
Screen scraping	Web services
Publishing	Participation
Content management systems	Wikis
Directories (taxonomy)	Tagging ('folksonomy')
Stickiness	Syndication

Anderson (2007) suggests six key ideas to explain the strong impact of the advent of Web 2.0 and claims they are 'direct or indirect reflections of the power of the network: the strange effects and topologies at the micro and macro level that a billion Internet users produce' (p. 14). These key ideas are:

- **Individual production and user generated content**: Blogs and other self-publishing tools strengthen the trend of citizen journalism and allow people to be noticed more easily. YouTube, an early example of a platform for self-expression and online creativity, increased its user visits by 297%, making it the fastest growing website from January to June 2006 (Freeman & Chapman 2011). Trip Advisor is another example, allowing users to review hotels and then report their views based on personal experiences (Browning, Fung So & Sparks 2013; Kline, Barreda et al. 2010).
- **Harnessing the power of the crowd:** Reflects the collective intelligence that is emerging from user participation and crowd sourcing. This involves solving problems and collecting materials from the users who gather on the internet, with the subsequent tagging and online contributions. The idea behind the wisdom of the crowd suggests that a group of people will answer questions more thoroughly than a single expert (Levy & Stone 2006). The authors argue that the users behind the Web 2.0 tools are not an audience but rather a community.
- **Data on an epic scale:** There has been an enormous increase in information that can be found on the internet due to user generated content. This information can be

organised into what is termed 'mashups', which reflect several applications merged into one for an easier use and consumption of information content.

- **Architecture of participation**: Designing a Web 2.0 service according to participation patterns and user preferences is critical. Open source software is an example of this, where self-managed communities of programmers can work simultaneously towards the shared goal of designing better technological innovations (West & O'Mahony 2008).

- **Network effects:** Reflect the 'economic and social implications of adding new users to a service based on the Internet' (p. 20). Stemmle (2008) argues that there are two kinds of network effects: a positive one, where a system is more useful the more users it has; and a negative one, where the system reaches a usage peak and fails to perform effectively (for instance, a website with too many users and a limited bandwidth). Web 2.0 is associated with the former, enabling positive user experiences.

- **Openness:** This proposal reflects the open fashion of how Web 2.0 services function so as to promote the usage of open source software, the offering of free data for general use, and 'working in a spirit of open innovation' (Anderson 2007, p. 25). This key idea allows developers and programmers to create ICT tools faster, as well as providing users with more information that is easy to access.

Web 2.0 is also seen as a central contributor to the development of the Semantic Web, which provides a simpler way to locate and share information on the web, as well as to reuse and group information sources. While there is a common belief that Web 2.0 and the Semantic Web are competitors in the future development of the Web, others argue that each approach complements the other (Battle & Benson 2008; Ankolekar, Krötzsch el al. 2007). The Semantic Web has managed to develop new formats to present and group data from different resources; however, it suffers from a lack of a critical number of users to allow the widespread use of this data. On the other hand, Web 2.0 has succeeded in attracting massive audiences worldwide so as to continually build user generated data. However, Web 2.0 processes find it difficult to integrate all of that data semantically (Battle & Benson 2008; Ankolekar el al. 2007).

In his assessment of Web 2.0, five years after he first coined the term, Tim O'Reilly argues that the next direction of the web is to interact with the physical world and to rely on crowd

sourcing to make it a better environment in which to exist (O'Reilly & Battelle 2009). The authors name this new direction 'Web Squared' (p. 1) and highlight examples to demonstrate its power. For instance, the election of Barack Obama in 2008 is used as a case study of how the internet can play a major part in political transformation, whilst disaster reporting using Twitter has allowed the formation of organisations such as INSTEDD (Innovative Support to Emergencies, Diseases and Disasters). The social elements that O'Reilly and Battelle (2009) propose in the Web Squared environment increases the structure and complexity of Web 2.0 sites, which tend to offer more personalisation through the use of server-side technologies such as Javascript (Cormode & Krishnamurthy 2008).

2.3 Social Media: Background and Definitions

Boyd and Ellison (2007) present the history of social media websites, and argue that the trend started with the launch of SixDegrees in 1997, the first website that allowed its users to build personal profiles, invite friends and identify others in their close social circles. The authors mention Friendster, an online dating website, as the next milestone in the history of social media, and suggest that it failed to survive due to its inability to technically cope with the growing audiences as a result of its popularity. MySpace was launched in 2003 to compete with Friendster, and became a magnet for musicians who created professional profiles to attract their fans. Boyd and Ellison (2007) further mention several other social media websites that emerged after 2003, each succeeding in specific geographic locations. These include Orkut, which gained popularity in Brazil and India; Bebo, which was especially successful in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia. Facebook was also noted to have managed to be popular in several destinations and enjoyed a widespread adoption.

Several authors have suggested different definitions for social media. A social media site can represent 'a virtual community in which people with shared interests can communicate by posting and exchanging information about themselves' (Shin 2010, p. 428). This information will reflect a community's social context and a social graph of linkages, which 'reveals patterns associated with the social roles and dynamics of that community' (Smith, Barash et al., p. 1, 2008). Social media can also be considered an information system in which users disseminate and gather information to and from other users (Kim et al. 2010). According to Hinchcliffe (2006), there are three distinctive characteristics reflected in online social media:

- The communication mode associated with social media has to be a conversation, not a monologue. In that conversation, censorship should be limited.

- The source of the content is the ordinary user who participates in the social media sphere.
- Honesty and authenticity is crucial for successfully engaging in social media.

Brzozowski et al. (2009) suggest that social media is a free broadcast platform, which 'have lowered the barriers to self-publishing on the web' (p. 61). This relatively new form of publishing brings to the web consumer-generated content (Xiang & Gretzel 2010), which is content of various types (text, videos, photos, audio) created and published by random users rather than by paid web publishers. Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that social media is represented by a long list of delivery platforms, from blogs and social bookmarking websites (for instance, Digg, Del.icio.us) to social media websites (for instance, Facebook, MySpace) and to eCommerce communities (for instance, eBay, Craig's List). According to Boyd and Ellison (2008), the uniqueness of social media is not that this new phenomenon provides a platform to meet strangers, 'but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks. This can result in connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made …' (p. 211).

In the context of this research, the last definition of social media by Boyd and Ellison (2008) is the most appropriate, as it focuses on the ease of connection between individuals. That includes the direct interaction between companies and potential clients that was limited and more complicated in the Web 1.0 era, before the social media age. Today, 'consumers are in control; they have greater access to information and greater command over media consumption than before' (Vollmer & Precourt 2008, p. 5).

The research focus will be based in Facebook, which is the most popular social media website (Efrati 2010). This also sets a well-defined boundary for the study. Although focusing on Facebook as a social media platform, findings could easily be extended to other types of online social media platforms. In this study, the terms 'social media' and 'social networks' are interchangeable and are taken to be equivalent, as social media contains all of the Web 2.0 applications, from social bookmarking sites to RSS feeds – and social networks such as Facebook as well (Roblek et al. 2013; Turban & Volonino 2011).

2.4 Important Terms of Web 2.0 and Social Media

The Web 2.0 era has led to the creation of new tools and actions that users and web developers perform while interacting with technology. The following section provides an overview of the main tools and actions that are related to Web 2.0 in general and social media in particular.

- **RSS:** The acronym of Really Simple Syndication, which allows users to subscribe to a certain webpage and be notified whenever that page is changing. Distributing news items online is the RSS's most popular usage (O'Reilly 2005).

- **Blog:** Short for Web Log. A collaborative web journal that allows the user to post diary entries about any topic (Ding et al. 2005).

- **Wiki:** An information website that allows everyone to edit, delete or change its content. A Wiki site combines an HTML editor and an auditing system that documents any changes that users make to entries. Wikipedia is a good example of a Wiki (Parker & Chao 2007).

- **Social bookmarking:** A web service that allows users to 'share, classify, and discover interesting resources' (Yanbe, Jatowt et al. 2007, p. 107) by saving their favourite web pages online rather than on their computer-based browsers (Dalsgaard 2006).

- **Tagging:** The process of manual indexing on the web, as performed by random individuals and users rather than experts (Voss 2007). Tagging is mainly used on blogs or images; tags can include words, acronyms or numbers.

- **Tweet:** A comment or information update posted by a user on Twitter, of up to 140 characters in length (Honeycutt & Herring 2009).

2.5 User Perceptions of Using Social Media

In order to determine whether potential customers are satisfied when using social media, it is essential to consider the electronic satisfaction of users with respect to the traditional web medium. Customer satisfaction on the web or 'eSatisfaction' (Szymanzki & Hise 2000), is usually evaluated by four variables: information quality, system quality, perceived effectiveness and social influence (Schaupp et al. 2006). The authors investigated these variables and found perceived effectiveness to be the strongest predictor of eSatisfaction. When it comes to social media, Kim et al. (2010) claim that perceived enjoyment is the main

element influencing users to adopt these platforms, followed by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. In addition, they suggest that the user's personal degree of innovativeness defines how he or she will perceive enjoyment, usefulness and ease of use while using social media. Enjoyment was found to be the main reason to join social media by Lin and Lu (2011) as well, noting that social media platforms needed to invest resources in developing more applications that promoted user enjoyment, fun and pleasurable experiences.

Brzozowski et al. (2009) examined what influences people to contribute in the social media environment of the workplace. One of their findings suggests that feedback via comments can be the strongest influence on sustaining users' contributions through this medium. Still in the workplace, DiMicco et al. (2009) suggest that users share information on a social network as they enjoy connecting to other colleagues, want to progress their status in the business hierarchy, and wish to promote their ideas and projects. Building social capital was linked directly to Facebook usage in the work of Ellison et al. (2007), who examined college students. The authors found that students mainly interacted with people with whom they maintained offline relationships, and so Facebook served as a platform for strengthening existing or traditional connections, as well as starting new ones. Zywica and Danowski (2008) investigated sociability and self-esteem as factors that influence social media usage. They found that both extroverted and introverted users participate in social media as part of their positioning efforts. In addition, those who are popular offline enhance their popularity online by having a long list of Facebook friends and many postings, while those who are less sociable offline will compensate by creating a more attractive presence online using professional photos or writing about positive experiences they may have had. Similar findings are presented by Barker (2009), who suggests that social compensation is evident with older adolescents' behaviour on social media. The author noted that youngsters with low self-esteem and social difficulties use social media to help them maintain relationships with others.

Lampe et al. (2010) claim that the main reason for a user to open an account in an online social community is one of having an 'Evaluative Social Identity' (p. 8), which is an estimation of how central the user thinks he or she is in the social network. This is not an indicator of the user's level of participation in that network – some people seeing the act of opening an account on a social media site as a valuable contribution in itself. Indeed, individuals feel that they will be central to the site just by launching their presence, while adding content is not associated with contribution (Lampe et al. 2010). The most important

use of Facebook, according to Joinson (2008), is the activity of social surveillance, which allows the user to locate old friends or colleagues and to learn about their progress in life. Ames and Naaman (2007) discuss the reasons that allow users to tag their photos on social photography sites such as Flickr, and identify four main characteristics:

- Search and retrieval: a feature that allows organising the photos for future browsing.
- Memory and context: a feature that allows adding a tag that will help the photographer identify the context in which the photograph was taken.
- Public search and photo pools: a feature that assists others to find the photo.
- Context and signalling: a feature that allows tagging so that others, mainly friends and family, will learn about the photographer's emotions and attitudes towards the object in the photograph.

The authors claim that although most users have an initial single motivation for adding tags, they sometime have multiple benefits.

With a significant number of photos uploaded to Facebook each month, the platform is a central domain for people to reflect aspects of their social life, usually by emphasising fun rituals with friends (Mendelson & Papacharissi 2009). According to the authors, young users share photos on Facebook to 'demonstrate the primacy of relationship' (p. 26). Tagging photos of newcomers by their friends on Facebook does not necessarily increase their participation, whereas social learning, which reflects people observing friends' contributions, from status updates to photo uploading and tagging – actually does (Burke et al. 2009). Harris and Rae (2010) claim that a common expectation among users of business social networks, such as Ecademy, is to receive useful content from others, such as business tips and best practices. It is a culture of trust and of giving that pushes the online collaboration ahead.

Table 2.1 summarises the various studies done on user perceptions of using social media, as discussed in this section.

Table 2.1 Previous Studies on User Perceptions and Social Media

Author	Theory	Focus of Study	Findings
Szymanzki and Hise (2000)	eSatisfaction	Individual/user based	Customer satisfaction on the web has to be considered when building web tools and products.
Schaupp, Fan et al. (2006)	eSatisfaction	Individual/user based	eSatisfaction is usually evaluated by four variables: information quality, system quality, perceived effectiveness and social influence
Kim et al. (2010)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Perceived enjoyment is the main element influencing users to adopt social media, followed by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.
Lin and Lu (2011)	Social Media Adoption	Organisational	Social media platforms needed to invest resources in developing more applications that promoted user enjoyment, fun and pleasurable experiences.
Brzozowski et al. (2009)	Social Media Adoption	Organisational	Feedback via comments can be the strongest influence on sustaining users' contributions through social media in the workplace.
DiMicco et al. (2009)	Social Media Adoption	Organisational	Users share information on a social network as they enjoy connecting to other colleagues, want to progress their status in the business hierarchy, and wish to promote their ideas and

			projects.
Ellison et al. (2007)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Students mainly interacted with people with whom they maintained offline relationships, and so Facebook served as a platform for strengthening existing or traditional connections, as well as starting new ones.
Zywica and Danowski (2008)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Both extroverted and introverted users participate in social media as part of their positioning efforts. Those who are popular offline enhance their popularity online by having a long list of Facebook friends and many postings, while those who are less sociable offline will compensate by creating a more attractive presence online using professional photos.
Barker (2009)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Youngsters with low self-esteem and social difficulties use social media to help them maintain relationships with others.
Lampe et al. (2010)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	The main reason for a user to open an account in an online social community is one of having an 'Evaluative Social Identity', which is an

			estimation of how central the user thinks he or she is in the social network.
Joinson (2008)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	The most important use of Facebook is the activity of social surveillance, which allows the user to locate old friends or colleagues and to learn about their progress in life.
Ames and Naaman (2007)	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Users have multiple reasons for adding tags to photos on Facebook, such as search and retrieval or memory and context.
Mendelson and Papacharissi 2009	Social Media Adoption	Individual/user based	Young users share photos on Facebook to demonstrate the importance of the relationships in their life.

2.6 Social Media as a Marketing Tool

With the emergence of social media there is a growing recognition in the shift from 'push marketing' to a conversation model, where customers make their purchase decisions based on content from peer reviews, blogs and tagging (Wirtz, Piehler & Ullrich 2013; Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010; Chan & Yazdanifard 2014). Walker (2001) found that the consumers' emotional attachment to a product is usually determined by word of mouth, as it helps them to minimise the uncertainty before the final purchase. According to Trusov et al. (2009), word of mouth messages have a longer carryover effect than push marketing. This is strongly connected to social media marketing, as suggested by Kozinets et al. (2010). The authors claim that in order to be successful, a word of mouth marketing (WOMM) campaign has to match the character narrative (for instance, the bloggers who post

about it), the communications forum (for instance, the Facebook page or the Twitter account), and the expected communal norms in that forum.

The previous goal of online marketers was to encourage users to click through to the company's official website, while in the social media age it is to 'create sustained engagement with the consumer' (Harris & Rae 2010, p. 4). The majority of the biggest private businesses in the US are already using social media for marketing purposes. For instance, Larson (2009) demonstrates how companies such as Xerox, Gillette and T-mobile have utilised the viral effect of social media in order to increase brand awareness. Seventy-five per cent of the Inc. 500, America's fastest growing entrepreneurial businesses, were familiar with social media in 2009, compared with 57% a year earlier (Barnes & Mattson 2009). Turban and Volonino (2011) indicate that some 18% of the Fortune 500 companies have an official business-to-consumer blog. This suggests that the leading companies recognise the importance of being able to shift from having a static web presence, towards the maintenance of a two-way communication channel with their customers, using social media.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that marketing managers cannot ignore the centrality of social media as a tool in the information search process of potential customers, and believe it should be incorporated into the integrated marketing communications scheme of an organisation. In order to maintain some of the control that is lost in this paradigm change (that is from one-way to two-way communication), the authors propose several methods for companies to shape the discussion and its content according to their needs. Some of the methods include:

- the provision of networking platforms: a feature that allows the building of online communities of people with similar interests that relate to the company and its products
- engagement with customers in both traditional and non-traditional ways: for instance, having competitions with online voting to increase interactivity and a sense of involvement
- the provision of exclusivity: a feature that provides the customers with unique information and/or services, to make them feel special.

Reyneke et al. (2010), who examined luxury wine brands, claim that brand managers who do not actively intervene in their social media discussions may cause reputation damage, as

social media has become even more influential and powerful than traditional media. Apart from marketing, promotion and sales, social media can offer other benefits to businesses (Turban & Volonino 2011). The authors discuss the business use of Web 2.0 technologies, and mention the recruiting of personnel via a social network such as LinkedIn as having a major benefit, together with supply chain management as well as internal communication. With respect to internal communication, the authors suggest that the organisational intranets, being closed web-based networks for business use, will have to adopt some Web 2.0 features like social tagging and file sharing, in order to become more socially inclusive and interactive.

Small businesses have also discovered the marketing potential of social media. A US-based study suggests that more small firms are adopting social media tools, with around 45% of the respondents indicating they have a social media presence on either Facebook or Twitter (Jantsch 2009). The use of social media among small businesses grew from 12% to 24% in 2009 (Turban & Volonino 2011; Network Solutions 2010). This trend is evident in Australia as well, with 27% of small businesses that are online using social media for business purposes (Sensis 2012) – although this adoption is significantly behind their large business counterparts. Harris and Rae (2009) argue that the potential social media has for small businesses with a limited advertising budget lies in its cheap operational cost, making it a good platform to experiment with. The authors also emphasise its importance for future marketing efforts. Social media, as a new phenomenon, can be found across different industries. For example, Segbers (2010) suggests that hospitals should use social media to interact with their patients, listen to them, and make sure that their posts and comments are getting a proper and immediate response. Schmitt-Beck and Mackenrodt (2010) demonstrate how personal communication and social networks appear to be more influential than mass communication in mobilising German citizens to vote during local elections.

2.6.1 Some Challenges Associated With Social Media Presence

Some authors suggest that there can be misconceptions and inconsistencies regarding social media and its effectiveness as a marketing or a public relations medium. Taylor and Kent (2010) conducted a content analysis of popular public relations journals and noted that there is neither criticism nor questioning of the value of using social media platforms in the public relations profession. Of the articles that were examined in their study, only 18 discussed the potential value of social media with regard to identifying concrete examples regarding its

reach and marketing power. In addition, best practices that were mentioned in those articles were 'always anecdotal and rarely provide any evidence that the tactics are effective. The suggestions often reflect little more than basic understanding about the technology's potential for two-way communication' (p. 212). The authors suggest that more research is required regarding social media in order to build a more accurate picture of the phenomenon.

Treadaway and Smith (2010) highlight how companies need to be aware of the potential negative effects of using social media for communication and marketing, given the real-time workings of the channel. The immediacy of social media could result in strong emotional-based comments by consumers against a company or a brand, which are generally posted immediately to a large audience. The authors mention an important differentiator between companies using social media is that there are some firms that deal with negative comments, and those that prefer to ignore them.

In order to minimise the negative effects of social media presence, Russell (2010) advises to examine the strategy of using social media for marketing purposes before launching the actual channels via a SWOT analysis, which is the most common hands-on analytical tool for strategic planning (Piercy & Giles 1989). The SWOT method was developed in the '60s by a group of researchers at the Stanford Research Institute, while working on techniques to analyse corporate planning (Koo & Koo 2007).

A recent example of SWOT analysis for social media platforms is supplied by the US Air Force, which had used social media for recruiting purposes and wanted to apply it for crisis communication management and community outreach as well (Pollitt 2011). The author highlights many important findings of that study under each SWOT analysis area that are summarised in Table 2.1 and which can be arguably used by businesses.

Table 2.2: SWOT analysis of social media platforms – US Air Force (Pollitt 2011)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Rapid information distribution: whatever you post on social media can be seen online immediately • Ease and mobility of use thanks to laptops, mobile devices and tablets	• Information can be inaccurate, as anyone can potentially post on social media • Lack of review • Feedback problems

Quick and easy feedback Unlimited access	Anyone can access
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Share organisational information quickly • Promote activities and people in positive light, as the organisation is in control of the platform and its content • Develop community even outside the organisation	• Information can be used against us • Organisations can be painted negatively as well, especially if monitoring is limited • Complainers, dissenters and unwanted influences

2.8 Social Media Good Practices

There is a growing body of knowledge about good practices and guidelines applied to social media marketing, which can be divided into three categories: social media strategy, content and feedback.

2.8.1 Strategy Good Practices

The good practices under the 'Strategy' category relate to the questions that have to be answered before using social media for marketing purposes, in order to maximise results and to save time and money. Some of these questions include: What is the main goal of the desired social presence and/or the social campaign? What are the audience characteristics and needs? What are the technology capabilities of the business? Who exactly will maintain the social presence? (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010)

Indeed, organisations and notable brands that use social media without a clear strategy may be overlooked by the users or even attract negative comments as happened to Wal-Mart, after it neglected the maintenance of its Facebook page (Beuker 2009, Owyang 2007). Intel has positioned its social media strategy around Facebook's news feed optimisation, which allows the company to improve its engagement with its audience, pushing their news through to the fans' Facebook Wall (Stelzner 2010). The author also mentions Intel's social media policy that was written by the company's Social Media Centre of Excellence, and has to be followed

by its employees and contractors when participating in social media on behalf of Intel. The policy includes strategy that addresses:

- posting behaviours, such as staying loyal to the employee's area of expertise. That is, writing about topics that are related to your position, rather than exploring unfamiliar fields of knowledge that might lead to credibility problems
- rules of engagement, such as being honest and transparent about the employee's real identity and his or her affiliation with Intel. This transparency may also help to increase credibility in the brand, as users will feel that they interact with professionals
- moderation rules, which include specific guidelines on how to monitor user comments, how to respond, and so on.

Wilson et al. (2011) suggest four different social media strategies that can be used by a business, each having unique characteristics. The first is 'Predictive Practitioner', which defines a business that allocates social media projects between specific departments (no cross-collaboration on the project with other departments). This business has a well-defined goal behind the project and it makes sure to measure its success. The second is the 'Creative Experimenter', where the business wishes to learn and improve by experimenting with social media and encouraging user engagement. The outcomes are not a top priority in this strategy and the projects change quite often. The third is having a 'Social Media Champion', a dedicated social media department with a clear social media policy, and that shares best practices across the business. And, finally, there is a person in the firm noted as the 'Social Media Transformer' who works on social media projects within different areas of the business and focuses on how social media can transform the business due to market trends. The authors recommend that companies without a clear social media strategy should adopt one if they wish to succeed in the long-run.

Measuring the performance of social media requires a strategy as well, as suggested by Hoffman and Fodor (2010), who suggest four potential approaches a business can use. According to the authors, marketing managers have the option to be in a 'Dead End', where their limited competence of measuring social media effects and their lack of belief in the success of social media will most likely end with a failure. 'Measure and Adjust' is a strategy where the business marketer can measure some of his/her actions on social media and the results can indicate levels of success or failure. This allows people to learn from mistakes and move forward to the next strategy, which is 'Iterate for Success'. Here, the marketer has a

good ability to measure social media outcomes based on how successful the strategy has been. The last type of strategy, and where most marketing managers begin their journey with social media, is called 'Naïve Optimist'. In this strategy, the marketer has limited or no real competence to measure social media effects, but believes it is still of value to persist with. The marketing person, when in this situation, can adopt an 'Iterate for Success' strategy or, in the worst case scenario, be a 'Dead End'.

After examining how brands and businesses used Facebook pages, Mayfield (2010) suggests several approaches for developing an effective marketing strategy:

- Search engines: Facebook competes with Google and other search engines and, in the long run, users will perform searches on Facebook. Hence, developing content on a business' Facebook page is important for its future success.

- Media hype: It is important to consider the negative speculations that sometimes appear in the media regarding the future of Facebook in context, and to rely on current user Facebook statistics when creating a strategy.

- Community pages: These are automated pages for businesses, locations and organisations that can improve Facebook's search results, but at the same time compete with official pages. Therefore, it is advised to implement a solid content strategy that will help users understand where the central business page on Facebook is.

- Negative aspects: Having a brand page may lead to public relations problems, given that Facebook is built around user generated content. These potential problems have to be taken into consideration when creating the page in terms of the appropriate resources needed to address response to negative content.

- Getting to fans: Every Facebook strategy has to include techniques of reaching new fans, as the competition with other Facebook pages is fierce. Some techniques include using Facebook Ads and reaching out to top bloggers, media writers and journalists who cover an area that relates to the firm's brands.

- Facebook is changing: New additions and user interface developments require businesses to quickly consider adopting them to ensure keeping the brand up to date within the social network environment.

- eCommerce: Facebook also addresses the electronic commerce (eCommerce) world, and marketers need to be aware of that and think how they can sell their brands via the page.

2.8.2 Content Good Practices

Under the 'Content' category there is a requirement to publish creative material. Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) suggest that users will share interesting, meaningful content that contributes to developing their knowledge and that entertains them – which may lead to an anticipated viral effect. This content has to be compelling, relevant and practical for the users to appreciate and perceive as being meaningful. Green (2009) presents case studies of different business brands and their Facebook content posts and selection: Pringles was found to rely heavily on videos in order to achieve a broad reach of people (virality); Starbucks, which updates its status regularly using an informative and casual tone, enables the company to achieve an informal brand identity; Adidas, joined MTV to create a special competition, which broke the usual structure of status updates and attracted many new fans; and Red Bull, that integrated a Twitter stream into its Facebook page, showing tweets from sponsored athletes who promoted the brand. This integration is unique as it sourced relevant content outside of Facebook, saving the users the time and effort that would be required to find it outside the social media domain. These content examples demonstrate brand authenticity, as advised by Muniz and Schau (2011), who suggest that it is important to consider non-commercial content as well as traditional content about brands when using social media. The authors mention Toyota's marketing strategy as one that is centred on building consumer trust by documenting authentic user stories. Drell (2011) suggests several content guidelines aimed at tourism brands on Facebook that include:

- hosting competitions to excite fans and to generate supportive content around the brand
- posting diversified content, from videos to photos and user reviews. A mixed content offering will increase the engagement with the users
- embedding booking widgets on the Facebook page, allowing for point of sales that generate transactions without asking the users to visit the official firm website
- using high quality images.

Spraggon (2011) identifies numerous social media good practices that can be adopted by organisations. In regard to content, the author recommends maintaining a balance between user generated content and official content – official content being written by the people or administrators that manage a business's social media presence. This practice will maximise the chances of a social media presence to reach its goals.

Nusair et al. (2012) evaluated how Generation Y, which includes people that were born from the early '80s to the early 2000s, interact with online social networks (OSNs) for travel planning purposes. They recommend that the social media administrators need to focus on providing useful content about the tourism product – for instance, the hotel or the destination. Furthermore, the level of engagement by Generation Y users with regard to social media-based travel communities will be determined by the benefits that these communities provide for users, ranging from practical information content to prizes and discounts.

2.8.3 Feedback Good Practices

The 'feedback' good practices relate to the continuation of the dialogue between the business and its clients through social media. Participation is the essence of social media, so time has to be invested by a firm in developing new ideas to make their social media presence more effective and entertaining (Brogan 2007; Headshift 2009; Novak 2010).

Sherman (2010) suggests that it is important to post content on a daily basis in order to maintain an updated discussion, as well as to show an ongoing presence in the social sphere. They note that automated or scheduled posts, as well as formulaic responses with a computer script, may damage the feedback efforts. It is also important that negative comments should be dealt with humour, as harsh feedback or comment deletion may lead to a potential consumer and fan backlash (Fauscette 2010). Fauscette further divides negative comments into three main groups: an attack over a real matter; constructive criticism; and spamming (attacking with no real reason). He suggests that in many cases the feedback to these negative comments will come from other group members, making the moderator's participation unnecessary. When an official response is needed, Spraggon (2011) recommends responding as soon as possible in order to make sure that the social media presence is up to date.

When focusing on Facebook, Barash et al. (2010) discovered that status updates that were either entertaining or depressing generated more feedback than those posts that were boring or uplifting. In addition, the authors claim that the Facebook presence of users is being underestimated by them, and is probably much stronger than they think it is. Therefore, creating and maintaining an effective presence with the Facebook platform has to be undertaken with care. Evans (2010) suggests that companies should build cross-functional teams to operate their social media activities more effectively, allowing them to respond faster to users' different types of comments.

2.9 Facebook: Background and Business Benefits

Facebook, which was launched originally as a closed social network for college students in the US, enables its worldwide users to build a network of friends, exchange information and join groups or pages based on personal interests and preferences (Bumgarner 2007). The Facebook organisation reports on its News Room page that it has more than 1 billion active users as of October 2012, each user creating 90 pieces of content per month on average (Facebook 2012). In Australia, 44.01% of the entire population are using Facebook. That figure positions it in the 18th place among world countries (Social Bakers 2011). Nielsenwire reports on its website that the average time Australians spend on Facebook in a given month is 8.19 hours, and that it is the most popular social media site in both desktop and mobile (2010).

These numbers grew significantly following the introduction of the Open Graph and of a few social plug-ins, including the 'Like' button, at the F8 Developer Conference (O'Dell 2010). The Open Graph feature enables users to connect to any website with their Facebook's user name and password, and with social plug-ins that include the 'Like' button, they can share more information with their friends even outside of the Facebook domain. This development is also important for the companies that embed the Open Graph on their websites, as it provides them with unrestricted access to the users' public activity on Facebook (Axon 2010; McCarthy 2010). More developments and features on Facebook that assist businesses in their marketing efforts include Pages, a popular platform for creating business profiles which can then be used to attract fans via promotions and discussions; applications, which can be developed with Facebook's application programming interface to promote aspects of the business and to entertain fans; and Facebook Ads, the social network's advertising system that enables the business to identify, segment and promote particular products to its audience (Stay 2008; Driscoll 2009; Crum 2009). Table 2.3 provides a summary of some of the pertinent features that a business can use after it has adopted the Facebook platform.

Table 2.3: Facebook's features available to users and businesses

The Like Button	A social plug-in on the Facebook interface that is used to demonstrate the users' appreciation of an item they read on their news feed without writing a comment. The plug-in can be installed on any website wanting to provide its users with an option to share recommended content items with their friends on

	Facebook (Nam Ko, Cheek et al. 2010).
Facebook's Open Graph	A protocol enabling users to connect to websites with their Facebook access details in order to share more information with their Facebook friends using social plug-ins such as the Like button. Companies that have adopted the Open Graph capabilities gain unrestricted access to the users' public activities on Facebook (Axon 2010; McCarthy 2010).
Facebook Insights	A free service within the Facebook platform that provides Facebook Page administrators and developers with data regarding user growth, content preferences and demographics (Cvijikj 2010). For instance, the service can reveal which posts were the most popular in terms of user feedback (that is, writing comments 'liking' the post, and so on). As a result, page administrators can create similar posts and improve user engagement.
Facebook Pages	A service provided by Facebook that allows companies, brands and public figures to create an official space in the social network, similar to a website, for self-promotion purposes (Munoz & Towner 2010). The authors suggest that successful pages are ones that provide an added value proposition for their followers. The authors mention Starbucks, Coca Cola and Disney as companies that have used Facebook Pages for value-adding purposes such as entertainment, providing useful information and giving away prizes.

Facebook Pages can be used by companies to embed several applications to entertain their fans. Some of these applications are produced by Facebook, for instance, Photos, which is the most popular photo application on the web (Hickey 2007) and Events. Other applications are produced by third party developers who wish to take advantage of the Facebook Platform, and have resulted in thousands of new applications being made available for the social network in its first year (Arrington 2008).

Facebook Pages have gone through several design changes since their inception, with the main one occurring soon after the launch of Facebook Timeline (see below). |
| **Facebook** | Paid advertising that works virally by being placed on a Facebook's user |

Ads	profile in accordance with the personal preferences and interests of the user (Weintraub 2011).
Facebook Timeline	Timeline was launched in 2011 as the updated profile and brand page design associated with Facebook presence. It replaced the old design and presented a series of 'photos, stories and experiences that tell your story' (Facebook 2012). Some new features in the Timeline include the cover photo, which provides a big header image that dominates the screen, as well as the ability to scan the profile or the brand page by jumping to a certain month or year.

One of Facebook's biggest challenges is the issue of online privacy (Debatin et al. 2007; Hart 2010; Diaz 2010; Reisinger 2011). Debatin et al. (2007) present examples of the risk posed by Facebook to users' privacy. The authors claim that while most users have a basic understanding of the network's privacy settings, the perceived benefits of using Facebook are usually stronger than privacy breaching fears. Two innovations have contributed to the debate around privacy on Facebook. The first is Facebook Places, a geo-location tool that enables users to report where they are via mobile registration or 'check-in'. Hart (2010) and Diaz (2010) argue that burglars and other criminals can potentially use the data on Facebook Places to plan their crimes. The second innovation, a new form of advertising on Facebook, is related to what is called Sponsored Stories that also has implications for identifying individuals. Facebook poses a threat to privacy within the social network environment as it presents users' check-ins as commercial ads without an option to opt out in their privacy settings (Reisinger 2011). Following the launch of Places, it was announced by Facebook that the service would be altered from its initial form; instead, users could tag their location in their status updates or photos (Choney 2011).

Some other privacy-related changes have been introduced by Facebook to improve its service and to strengthen user confidence. For example, allowing people to approve tags that identified them before they actually appeared online, thus avoiding situations where private information about places they had been to, or photos of themselves, were being published by others. In addition, Facebook changed the terminology in its privacy settings from 'Everyone' to 'Public' – avoiding any confusion regarding the publication of people's updates and how these could be distributed. Finally, the assimilation of the privacy settings button next to each

sharing option, from status updates to different sections of the user's profile, maximised user control over their Facebook accounts (Cohen 2011).

McKeon (2010) proposed a visualisation of the evolution of online privacy on the Facebook platform. Figure 2.0 depicts how a user's information on Facebook, from photos to contact information, can be seen by more people, including strangers, than it used to be in the network's early days. The blue colour on the diagrams represents the content types that can be shared on Facebook, either publicly or privately.

Figure 2.0 The Evolution of Online Privacy on Facebook – 2005, 2010 (adopted from McKeon 2010)
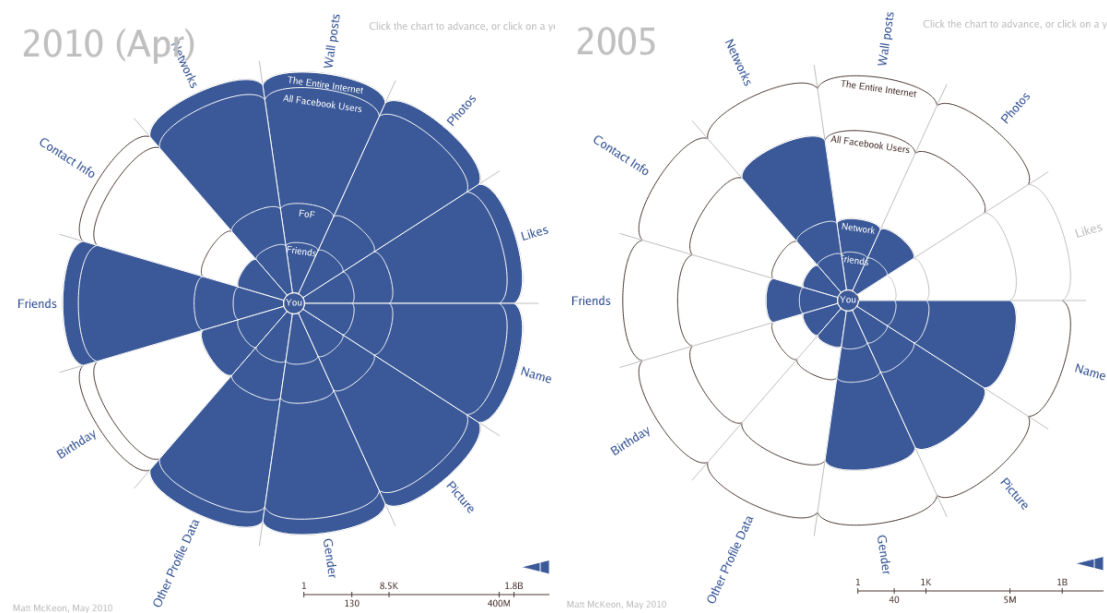
2.9.1 Business Benefits of Using Facebook

Scholars and social media commentators have started documenting the applications and benefits of using Facebook for business purposes. Montgomery and Chester (2009) discuss food marketing and its effects on youth, and suggest that the top brands in the food and beverage industry, from Coca Cola to McDonald's, use social media marketing in order to create a discussion regarding their products. This can be viewed as a peer-to-peer marketing technique that has the power to create 'mass interpersonal persuasion (p. 22), where customer behaviours and attitudes can be gauged quickly according to the brand's goals and then be applied to a large audience. Dholakia and Durham (2010) examined the influence of a cafe chain's Facebook presence, and reported the customer behaviour changes of users who followed the business. They visited the cafe more often, recommended it to their friends and

increased their emotional attachment to the brand. Zhang (2009) investigated the successful use of Facebook by an American TV network, where the platform allowed the network to create an online game to promote a new series and attracted almost 200,000 unique users. Derham et al. (2011) examined the value that social media can bring to small and medium businesses using the case of a New Zealand restaurant. Their findings suggest that two sources of value are prominent when using Facebook pages. The first relates to time and budget efficiency, which was found to be a leading benefit for the business due to the minimal IT knowledge that is required to operate Facebook pages, as well as due to the fact that it is free of charge. The second value proposition noted was the novelty aspect of the platform, which was evident in the use of photographs on Facebook to promote the restaurant. The authors mention other sources of value of having a Facebook page, such as openness, which allows people to join using their real name. An unexpected, but value-adding aspect of Facebook noted by the authors was the success staff had in using the restaurant page to organise different work schedules.

Langheinrich and Karjoth (2010) argue that despite the business opportunities it offers, from promoting the process of knowledge transfer within the company to creating a positive working environment, Facebook and other social networking platforms can be distracting and inappropriately used when used in the workplace with no formal policy. Skeels and Grudin (2009) argue that while Facebook provides numerous professional uses, such as creating and strengthening professional ties as well as enhancing work efficiency, it can also result in tensions between work colleagues due to the blending of personal and professional life, lack of clear hierarchy and the danger in posting improper content. Due to the popularity among businesses, it is believed that Facebook pages have the potential to replace business websites and to become the hub of all commercial activity (Shankland 2011). Brands such as Adidas and Smirnoff place a link to their Facebook page on their advertisements rather than to their official website, in order to remind their fans why they 'liked' them in the first place and to encourage them to stay loyal to the brand (Stott 2010). Facebook is being used as a marketing tool in the tourism industry as well, endeavouring to convert followers and fans to customers (Hsu, 2012; Tse, 2013). Hsu (2012) reports that Taiwanese hotels use Facebook for electronic marketing where they have successfully engaged with the Chinese-speaking market. Tse (2013) discusses the commercial success of a Hong Kong hotel, which was achieved by using Facebook as a marketing tool to attract new guests and to retain previous clients.

Facebook offers researchers many study opportunities ranging from sociology to information systems thanks to its high traffic and technological advancements (Ellison, Steinfield et al. 2007). Ackland (2008) suggests that Facebook and other social networking services have a strong potential to assist social researchers via the relatively easy creation of eResearch tools – which arguably will have pertinent applications for the business environment. He compares these new networks to hyperlink networks such as blogs, and claims that the latter developed slower in regard to research opportunities due to lack of appropriate tools. With platforms like Facebook, where the users' data is machine-readable, development tools such as OpenSocial enhance the research possibilities. For instance, Visagie and De Villiers (2010) emphasise the pedagogical value of Facebook, and encourage more university lecturers to use it while teaching in order to elevate the learning experience of their students. Some of the authors' supporting arguments were around Facebook's interactive capabilities, which are useful in group work sessions where it is easy to use sharing and discussion options, and the students' familiarity with the system.

Friesen (2010) suggests that social networks such as Facebook do not function as learning environments, and that their main audience is the advertisers. According to the author, the product that Facebook sells is not really a social platform for better communication and information sharing, but rather 'the eyeballs of their users' that can be targeted by existing or potential advertisers. In order to support his claim, Friesen argues that the 'Like' button is an important feature of Facebook, which enables its users to share only items that they appreciate and respect, including favourite brands. Indeed, the absence of a 'Dislike' button emphasises the delicate relationship that Facebook has with the advertising world (Friesen 2010). The value of Facebook as a promotional channel can be demonstrated in Figure 2.1, presenting Facebook's dominance in the American social networking advertising market with $4.8 billion dollars spent on social advertising in 2012. This number is expected to grow to $9.8 billion dollars in 2016 (McGee 2012).

Figure 2.1: Local vs National Spend in Social Media (McGee 2012)
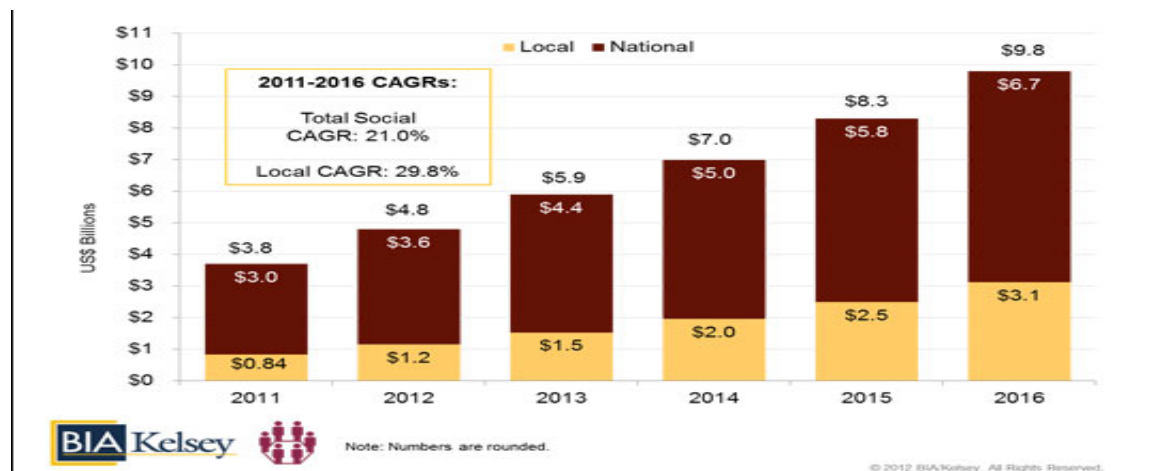
The 2011 Sensis report focused on the online experience of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Australia and revealed that 18% of the businesses that have an online presence are using social media, mostly via a Facebook page. Half of these businesses felt that Facebook had a positive impact on them, and that it was found to be a useful tool for networking and advertising (Sensis 2011). A year later, the percentage of businesses that were active in social media had jumped to 27%, with 86% of them maintaining a Facebook page (Sensis 2012). This report also found very few complaints regarding any negative impacts of using social media (and Facebook in particular) for business purposes.

Wong (2012) explored the factors that move SME owners from being personal users of Facebook to adopters of Facebook as a business platform (that is, creating and maintaining a business page). The results of his study, which covered 283 SMEs in Hong Kong, revealed that personal usage habits of Facebook and domain-specific innovativeness have a direct influence on the business usage of Facebook. Nobre and Silva (2014) found that Facebook can serve as a facilitator between SME's and customers while creating brand recognition.

A summary of business benefits associated with the use of the Facebook platform include:

- an unrestricted access to the users' public activities on Facebook, thanks to social plug-ins that include the Like button and the Open Graph (Axon 2010; McCarthy 2010). This access allows businesses to learn more about a fan's personal interests and purchasing behaviours in order to approach them with relevant marketing messages and to develop new and efficient products

- offering a peer-to-peer marketing technique through public discussions and interactions that assists with determining customer attitudes quickly and effectively

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(Montgomery & Chester 2009). Creating a supportive customer attitude may lead to future purchases and contribute to positive word of mouth promotion of the business and its brands

- efficiency in using a publishing platform without any prior knowledge (Derham et al. 2011). No money or time is required in order to learn how to use the system. This benefit can allow the business to begin with its Facebook operations immediately and to start examining how the platform impacts on the business's effectiveness and how business goals might be achieved

- novelty in taking advantage of the platform's advanced features, such as photo uploading (Derham et al. 2011) or the creation of applications for user engagement (Zhang 2009). Using these features, businesses are able to strengthen their public image, being viewed as technologically advanced and user friendly

- promoting knowledge transfer within the business (Langheinrich & Karjoth 2010). Businesses can learn from the success and failure stories of other businesses that are on Facebook by visiting their presences, and by optimising their own performance

- creating a positive working environment (Langheinrich & Karjoth 2010) and enhancing work efficiency (Skeels & Grudin 2009)

- creating and strengthening professional ties by using the platform for daily interactions with colleagues (Skeels & Grudin 2009)

- research application where Facebook and other social networking services have a strong potential to assist researchers via the relatively easy creation of eResearch tools (Ackland 2008). Arguably, such research will have pertinent relevance for conducting activities in business.

2.10 The Importance of Early Adopters in Considering Recent Innovations

Social media and Facebook as a Web 2.0 platform can be viewed as a recent innovation that both business and people are adopting. Different levels of innovativeness define the timing and degree to which a person adopts a new concept or idea. Rogers (2003) suggested a well-known model of the innovation-adoption process, which can be divided into five stages: (1) becoming acquainted with the innovation under examination; (2) structuring a positive or negative attitude towards it; (3) making a decision to adopt the innovation; (4) implementing the innovation; (5) and, after the innovation has been implemented, deciding whether to keep

it or not. The five steps in Rogers' model of the innovation-decision process are: Knowledge; Persuasion; Decision; Implementation; Confirmation (Rogers, 2003).

In his theory, Rogers (2003) portrays the early adopters as people who feel more comfortable with new ideas, innovations and/or technology, and who look for ways to improve their business. They are usually respected by their peers, and are perceived as opinion leaders. According to Rogers, these early adopters assist with reducing the uncertainty of an innovation or a new idea, thus assisting with increasing the rate of adoption. They are followed by the early majority, which is a category consisting of people who tend to be slower when adopting innovations; a late majority, who are usually sceptical about the success rate of an innovation, but will eventually adopt; and the laggards, who usually do not hold any leadership positions, are very traditional in their attitude to business, and will be the last to adopt an innovation. Rogers goes on to describe five main elements of an innovation that may affect diffusion. These are all associated with the persuasion stage:

1. Relative advantage: The new innovation seems to improve a former tool or service. Even if the innovation does not have an objective value or improvement from the one it may be substituting, the important thing is for the potential adopter to perceive that the innovation offers an advantage to him or her. Advantages are reflected in benefits the recent innovation provides, be they economic, social or political, and so forth.

2. Compatibility: The innovation fits with what potential adopters already know, providing an answer to a current problem. If a recent innovation is consistent with the social or cultural beliefs and life experiences of the adopter, its diffusion rates will increase.

3. Complexity: The innovation has to be simple and clear enough to use or understand in order to improve its adoption rates. Perceived ease of use can be viewed as being closely aligned with enhanced adoption of innovation.

4. Trialability: The extent to which an innovation can be experimented and modified by potential adopters.

5. Observability: The results from using the new innovation have to be visible and clear to potential adopters, to increase the adopting rates.

Rogers (2003) also mentions social change, which he sees as an adjustment in the structure and operation of a social system caused by an innovation. In this study, STEs can be viewed as the social system that has a shared goal and work towards its accomplishment. Any

innovation, which in this study is considered to be social media (reflected by the adoption of Facebook), may influence the way that these STEs operate and function in the tourism industry. This can naturally create a direct impact on how tourism products such as hotel rooms are marketed and consumed by consumers in Australia. For instance, electronic word of mouth can become a leading motivator in the room booking process of those STEs who maintain a Facebook presence. Social media, through the use of Facebook, is an information technology based on the Web 2.0 platform and internet communications channel, where users provide the majority of the content (Magid 2009).

When it comes to the adoption of new forms of information technology, O'Keefe et al. (1998) claim that early adopters achieve an advantage by being first to take some form of action, one that requires forward thinking. Some of the obstacles that stand in the way of these adopters are the difficulties with learning how to use the technology, as well as the costs of operating the innovation (Fichman, 1997). This finding was evident with the introduction of Friendster, a social networking website that was not as successful as expected due to a large number of early adopters encountering technical difficulties (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The authors also discuss the strong effect that early adopters have on shaping the growth and characteristics of social networks, as in the case of MySpace, that relied heavily on the music industry and their fans to expand its online presence. Notably, the social media platform added new features based on user requests which included adding hypertext mark up (HTML) codes into profiles, allowing people to easily add/change content. Java et al. (2007) demonstrate how early adopters shaped Twitter's user interface by using the '@' symbol in order to reply to specific users, an option that was not available in the website's original design.

Harris and Rae (2009) suggest the term 'Gifted Amateurs' in relation to early adopters of ICT and Web 2.0. The authors emphasise the importance of networking amongst small firm managers or owners, as it 'can aid the development of a firm's credibility, expand the customer base and supplier contacts, highlight access to resources and available funding, encourage innovation and help develop strategic partnerships.' (p. 697). The gifted amateurs in their study were able to leverage Web 2.0 skills and products, from blogging to social networking, in order to respond to the business requirements mentioned above. These gifted amateurs embodied a 'can do' attitude backed by good interpersonal skills that help them succeed in the dynamic digital world they operate in (Harris & Rea 2009).

Early adopters of social media and blogging, in particular, have the potential to generate 'buzz' or media attention around a particular topic (Finin et al. 2008). This 'buzz' is the foundation for electronic word of mouth marketing, which is an influential element in delivering the marketing message. This influential mechanism can be gained by a continuous effective presence using the social media platform, like posting on a particular topic in order to build perceived expertise (Cha et al. 2010). Relying only on the size of the audience (for instance, friends on Facebook or followers on Twitter) will not increase marketing influence (Romero et al. 2010). Notably, increasing one's social media sphere and delivering more information can improve social influence (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

The examples mentioned above emphasise the importance that early adopters have in the innovation adoption process. The curiosity and experimental nature of these adopters can help innovations such as social media (Facebook) diffuse and spread within a specific industry sector such as small tourism operators. As such, these early adopters use the innovation in a way that can potentially improve the products and services offered based on social media feedback and fan participation. This participation is highly crucial in social media, where user generated content and word of mouth marketing are key drivers in the success of these online platforms (Browning, Fung So & Sparks 2013; Xiang & Gretzel 2010). For this exact reason this study did not choose to incorporate the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis 1985) as it explains users' motivations for using a system, but does not focus exclusively on the early adopters of that system.

2.11 Tourism and ICTs

Information communication technologies (ICTs), and in particular the internet, are valuable for tourism enterprises at two levels. Firstly, they assist potential tourists to search for, locate, modify and buy tourism products and services. Secondly, they provide tools that expose firms to the global market, which allows them to sell their products worldwide (Buhalis 1998). Buhalis and Law (2008) claim that by using ICTs to inform the travel consumers, a traveller can significantly improve their interaction with local resources, as well as be able to find desirable services or products. Werthner (2003) indicates that the special features of the tourism industry, being highly networked worldwide, and offering a product that is reliant on an initial information search, have made the industry a leading player in electronic commerce.

Evidence of the globally networked feature of the tourism industry can be seen in the widespread use of computerised booking mechanisms. In order to handle the increasing demand from passengers, airlines developed and used computerised reservation systems (CRS), which are considered one of the first global information systems products (Werthner & Klein 2001). Buhalis (1998) suggests that the global distribution systems (GDS), which were developed in the '80s, have established a mode of communication that underpins tourism's electronic distribution channels. Indeed, four different GDS have emerged and control the travel and tourism industry, they being Galileo, Amadeus, Sabre and Worldspan (Schmid 1994). According to the author, their ability to allow multiple bookings for the customer at the same time, from airline tickets to shows and car rentals, are the GDS' important and significant feature.

Hotels and other accommodation providers also comprise an important segment within the tourism industry that implements ICTs, which have been noted to have a strong positive impact on their productivity (Scholochow et al. 2010). The authors, who examined the web presence of 3600 hotels in Austria, suggested that a hotel website is its central source of information for hotel selection. In addition to providing general information, a hotel website is also a platform for earnings and economic success through improved efficiencies (Chung & Law 2003). Monetary savings are also a critical factor, as booking a room through a travel agent's website can cost a significant amount more than if it were made directly through the hotel's website (Lim 2010).

The rise of Web 2.0 and travel-related virtual communities has strengthened the need to understand users' online behaviour and usage patterns in order to increase traveller satisfaction and to create consumer centric marketing (CCM). By using CCM, tourism businesses can offer consumers products that match their interests, motivations and habits (Niininen, March & Buhalis 2006). The relationship between motivation and visitor satisfaction that was associated with a tourism destination was examined by Devesa, Laguna and Palacios (2009). The authors conducted their examination in rural Spain and confirmed their hypothesis, suggesting that travel motivation is a crucial factor of visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, people indicated that independent satisfiers like gastronomy quality and opening hours, could also affect satisfaction irrespective of the tourist's motivation. The authors noted that in an online marketing perspective, these satisfiers should be promoted in order to increase people's engagement and to generate sales.

Web design and usability, in the context of tourism marketing, have also been examined by several scholars. Perdue (2001) examined the websites of tourism resorts and noted that an easy-to-use navigation system, accessibility and technological creativity lead to a positive image of a travel destination and to an overall product improvement. Zhou and DeSantis (2005) claim that poor usability, internationalisation problems and inaccessibility are evident in many tourism websites, despite the growing demand for tourism-related information online. In their study of city tourism websites, the authors suggest a set of recommendations with regard to web design, such as the implementation of a digital interactive map, the presentation of local information such as weather conditions and expanding the way to engage users. Kim and Fesenmaier (2008) investigated tourism sites and indicate that inspiration-related elements (for instance, photos or multimedia) were the most successful in 'converting website lookers to users and/or making them stay longer on the website' (p. 10).

Table 2.4 synthesizes the IT in tourism literature that is relevant to the research questions in this study.

Table 2.4: A Summary of the IT in Tourism Literature Review Related to the Research Questions

Why Do Tourism Organisations Adopt IT	How Do Tourism Organisations Adopt IT
IT allows tourists to search for tourism products, and at the same time allows tourism businesses to gain global exposure (Buhalis 1998; Buhalis & Law 2008)	Hotels put a strong emphasis on publishing useful content on their websites, to allow users plan their holidays (Scholochow, Fuchs et al. 2010).
The technology, such as the GDS, assists tourism businesses with controlling the growing demand for tourism products (Werthner and Klein 2001; Buhalis 1998).	By using consumer centric marketing following the growing popularity of Web 2.0 and user generated content, tourism businesses offer consumers products that match their interests and habits (Niininen, March & Buhalis 2006)
A hotel website can significantly reduce costs as direct bookings eliminate the commission fee paid to a 3rd party agent. At the same time, it increases efficiency as bookings are done online (Lim 2010).	Travel destinations that built friendly websites enjoyed an improved user appreciation and a stronger brand image (Perdue 2001)
	Some city websites suffer from poor usability,

	internationalisation issues and inaccessibility (Zhou and DeSantis 2005)

2.11.1 Tourism and Social Media

A growing number of tourism organisations and businesses are examining the benefits of using social media as a tool to promote a destination, advertise hotel rooms and provide travel information (Leung et al. 2013). Research undertaken by Expedia Media suggests that destination marketing organisations (DMOs) invest less in offline media for marketing purposes and more in social media, as the latter is more affordable. However, the study reveals that many DMOs feel that they have not yet determined the optimal way to leverage the social media channel in their marketing strategy (HospitalityNet 2010), facing difficulties with some of the themes mentioned on section 2.8 about social media good practices (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010; Brogan 2007; Headshift 2009; Novak 2010).

Travel Michigan is an example for one of the DMOs that adopted social media for marketing reasons, with a 'Pure Michigan' Facebook page that doubled its followers from 50,000 to 100,000 in just one month (Vertical News 2010). It is reported that 30% of the followers were inspired to visit Michigan after visiting the page. This was also the case with another DMO, Tourism New Zealand, with social media taking a central part of the organisation's 3-year marketing plan (Ward 2010). Australia's national DMO, Tourism Australia, has emphasised the necessity of Facebook marketing to the tourism industry, saying that 'As more of the world continues to embrace the internet in new and diverse ways, this is an obvious medium we need to fully utilise to convey the depth and breadth of Australia's tourism experiences' (Sydney Morning Herald 2009). Mexico's tourism board planned to tackle the country's negative image by collaborating with Quepasa, one of the world's biggest Latino social networks to encourage positive word of mouth about visiting the country (Eye for Travel 2009). Hays et al. (2012) highlight the social media use by several DMOs worldwide, claiming that while the use of social media channels is growing, it is mainly experimental and therefore is not being utilised to the best effect by organisations.

An overview of the different roles that blogs play in the tourism industry was given by Schmallegger and Carson (2008) who suggest that blogging for tourism marketing purposes was not limited to consumer-to-consumer (C2C) communication, but rather was open to business to consumer (B2C) exchanges as well. Such blogs serve as an online tool to promote

business products and to strengthen customer relationships. Hawaii Tourism Authority has sponsored familiarisation tours for leading travel bloggers in order to expose the islands' offerings to potential visitors via social media (Scarborough 2009). Similar tours were organised by tourism operators in Far North Queensland, hoping to improve the image of the state following the floods of January 2011 by entering the blogosphere (Nancarrow 2011). A special blog promoting New Zealand as a travel destination, called The Blog4NZ Project, was launched after the Christchurch earthquake in February 2011, with the support of leading travel businesses such as Virgin Blue, Air New Zealand and Tourism New Zealand. The blog's aim was to attract worldwide bloggers to post about the country's visitor highlights in order to minimise fear among potential travellers (May 2011).

Parra-López et al. (2010) proposed a theoretical model to explain the factors determining people's intentions to use social media for planning a vacation or trip. The identification of what users appreciate when planning a trip using social media is important in designing a strategy that can be specific and relevant for a firm when adopting the social media channel. Their findings suggest that the benefits the user believes he or she get from using social media (social, functional, psychological and hedonic benefits) are the main reason associated with using social media when planning a trip. The study evaluated the above benefits, apart from psychological benefits, which were outside of its scope. Recent examples of using social media to plan a trip include Expedia's Facebook application Hotels With Me, which allows friends to search and book hotel rooms together (The Independent 2010); Trip Advisor's Trip Friend feature, which identifies and presents the traveller's Facebook friends who have visited the desired destination, enabling the person to contact them with questions regarding travel information (Sachoff 2010); and finally, Gowalla's Trip feature, using the platform's geo-location abilities that allow users to create personal trips and then share them on Twitter and other social networks (Crum 2010). Fotis et al. (2012) suggest that despite previous findings, social media is being used mainly after people return from a vacation or trip. This use of social media is characterised by photo and video sharing, text posts and other activities to revive holiday memories.

The hotel industry is making an increased effort to use social media for marketing and sales purposes (Murphy and Nolly 2012; Dev et al. 2010; Cantallops & Salvi 2014). According to Murphy and Nolly (2012), more small hotels are interested in learning about using social media as a marketing and recruitment platform, and their overall adoption of social media is generally influenced by the general manager and his marketing vision. Dev, Buschman et al.

(2010) urge hotel marketers to explore the benefits and features of social media in order to understand how to better engage and communicate with younger tourists.

O'Connor (2011) examined how major hotel chains use Facebook as a commercial tool and looked at four particular factors in their Facebook presence that included:

- monitoring, which represents the procedures that need to be taken in order to track the discussion about the firm's brands amongst users of the social network
- presence, which reflects the use of a fan page that is easy to locate and one that can be recognised as the official page of the organisation and its brands
- activity, which reflects the number of consumer or user generated posts on the page
- engagement, which is reflected in the number of 'Likes' and comments on the page.

O'Connor's results suggest that most hotel chains do not utilise Facebook's capabilities properly and suffer from low visibility and poor engagement. Russell (2010) alludes to a similar conclusion, stating that 'most hotels lack the resources required to effectively implement social marketing strategies' (p. 2). Chan and Guillet (2011) investigated the adoption of social media by 67 hotels in Hong Kong, and identified several problems that hotels seem to have with executing social media marketing activities. These problems included the lack of interaction between hotels and customers; a lack of commitment to sustain social media efforts (for instance, posting irregularly on Facebook, thus failing to build a stable presence); unresponsiveness to guests (that is, leaving users' comments or reviews unanswered, which damages the brand reputation of the hotel); and the posting of inaccurate content.

Clearly there are important benefits that tourism businesses can enjoy from using social media (and ICTs in general) as part of their business and marketing activities. A summary of these include:

1. tourism products being more accessible that directly results in increased sales (Buhalis 1998)
2. improved engagement and interaction with potential customers with a resultant increase in potential clients (Buhalis & Law 2008)
3. GDS that allow consumers to book different tourism products in a single interaction (Schmid 1994)

4. extending the exposure of a firm to the global market – reaching new audiences (Buhalis 1998)

5. utilising a hotel's website as a platform for economic development (Chung & Law 2003)

6. utilising a hotel's website so as to have more direct bookings and paying less commission fees to external agents (Lim 2010)

7. using a blog as a means to strengthen the relationships between tourism businesses and their clients (Schmallegger & Carson 2008)

8. using social media for marketing as a more affordable approach than using offline media (HospitalityNet 2010)

9. using social media platforms to inspire people to visit a destination in a relatively short time (Vertical News 2010)

10. using social media platforms to assist with reputation management and destination branding (Eye for Travel 2009)

11. using social media platforms to allow hotels to engage and communicate with younger audiences (Dev et al. 2010).

2.11.2 STEs and Issues of ICT's Adoption

Small tourism enterprises (STEs) are divided into several sectors such as accommodation, sites of interest and active recreation – each sector having its own characteristics and differences in its operational needs (Reichel & Haber 2005). These businesses dominate the tourism market and assist with improving local economies by promoting tourism through a wide range of tourism products (Bastakis et al. 2004). Many STE operators are entrepreneurial in nature and join the industry due to the unique lifestyle that it offers (Sellitto et al. 2011). The authors suggest that STEs have their own organisational methods and tend to react faster than large businesses to changes in working conditions and the availability of innovations.

There is no distinct definition of STEs in terms of size (Monday et al. 2009). The authors quote previous governmental statistics showing that a small business in Australia employs between 1 and 20 workers and a medium-sized business 20–199, whereas the British size of a small business is defined as 1–50 employees, and 50–249 to a medium-sized one. Some characteristics of STEs include being mostly family-run businesses with insufficient IT knowledge, and being resource poor, which makes it more difficult for them to adapt new

technologies (Franch et al. 2005; McGrath et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). In addition, STEs tend to suffer from an absence of a managerial vision and a long-term strategy (Bastakis et al. 2004; Ateljevic 2007). These authors all suggest that, due to their weak management quality and marketing activities, STEs usually focus on a product-oriented approach that highlights a specific offering (for instance, hotel rooms or tours of a region), rather than trying to gain an overview and requirements of the market in which they operate. For this reason, STEs might not recognise market trends that are related to the business use of ICTs (for instance, the use of online travel agents such as Expedia or Booking.com) and miss potential growth and strategic opportunities.

In their research of alpine STEs in France and Italy, Franch et al. (2005) claim that STEs tend to suffer from a lack of cooperation, perhaps due to the small number of people responsible for their operation and that many of them cannot fully appreciate the immense potential that the internet could play in improving their business strategy. The authors recognise the importance of ICTs with regard to day-to-day operations, information exchange and the relationship-building activities of STEs. ICT systems can assist STEs with their customer relationship management (CRM) efforts, as suggested by Ozgener and Iraz (2006). The authors claim that the obstacles STEs face with the adoption of CRM systems relate to insufficient resources to support the adoption process, absence of managerial commitment to CRM, as well as imperfect communication. In contrast, improved functionality associated with the uptake of ICTs among small and medium accommodation enterprises has been reported by McGrath et al. (2006), who examined the degree of interest of these enterprises in new online technologies. For instance, more than 60% of the businesses in their study were found to have an online booking facility. Pesonen's exploratory study of Facebook among Finnish rural tourism SMEs (2011) observed differences in their adoption of Facebook compared with big companies, with the former being slow to adopt Facebook for business.

From a global perspective, Google India found in their study that over 57% of STEs in the country used their website to sell products, and that travel businesses would be one of the leading contributors to online advertising in the future (Narayanan 2011). In South Africa, rural STEs suffer from information gaps that restrict them from maximising their business development (Bourgouin 2010). Seemingly, the adoption and use of ICT can lead to a re-design process of the relationships amongst rural South African STEs, extend networks and spread relevant knowledge more efficiently. In the UK, not all small hospitality enterprises have decided to adopt ICT from a business perspective, but rather for personal reasons, such

as to communicate with family members overseas (Martin 2004). According to the author, once they recognised its commercial value, STEs did not try to improve their ICT skills, but rather, hired web design firms to manage the technological aspect of the business. Martin further indicates that 'new knowledge-creating managerial skills from SME owners' (p. 88) have to be developed in the light of the new digital age.

2.11.3 ICT and Social Media Adoption among Australian STEs

The Australian tourism industry is believed to be one of the country's major sectors to benefit from ICT, mainly due to the suitability of its products to the characteristics of eCommerce (Sharma et al. 2000; Braun 2005). Despite this assumption, Australian STEs, who comprise between 90–95% of all the tourism businesses in the country (Davidson, Burgess et al. 2006) find it difficult to adopt new forms of information technologies. Other authors have also alluded to this issue. For instance, in his work on ICT and eCommerce adoption by regional STEs in Australia, Braun (2002) claimed that both the ICT infrastructure and the level of ICT skills are insufficient. Bridging this digital gap requires an intensive learning process. In addition, developing strong business connections between STEs and a culture of trust may help in overcoming some of the obstacles in the uptake of networked technologies. Similar barriers were found by Au (2010), who examined the Web 2.0 adoption of tourism businesses in New South Wales. Au's research demonstrated that STEs were the only non-adopters of Web 2.0 tools, mainly due to a lack of technical competence. Other problems that were identified include the initial cost of investment and the lack of knowledge on how to promote the STE website (Sharma et al. 2000).

Sellitto et al. (2010) noted that only 10% of Australian STEs used social networking websites for marketing purposes. In addition, the authors discovered that the minority of the businesses that participated in their research used ICT in an innovative manner, whereas most participants demonstrated a reactive and conservative approach. Breen et al. (2010) found that social networks are considered a relatively weak channel for learning and information seeking. On the other hand, Monday et al. (2009) were surprised to discover that most of the South Australian STEs in their study displayed a good level of ICT understanding that was mainly gained through experience in previous positions. It was also noted that providing customer value above traditional levels was found to be a major benefit of ICT adoption by STEs. Despite that, the authors claim that no STE received the highest score with regard to ICT skills level, suggesting that businesses '… reviewed their ICT use on a regular basis, had

an ICT recovery plan and evaluated the success of their ICTs' (p. 9). Burgess et al. (2009) noted, in spite of general assumptions that Australian bed and breakfast operators had a low online presence, some 55% of these accommodation businesses used online booking systems. The authors also emphasised the higher-than-expected number of online booking platforms that each business was using (3.3 on average). According to the authors, this figure reflected the adoption of external providers by some businesses, to help them with monitoring the multiple booking platforms they had implemented.

The 2010 Sensis eBusiness report, which examined the online behaviour of 1800 small and medium Australian businesses, suggests that only 10% of those SMEs who are connected to the internet use social media for business purposes such as advertising, building contacts and collaborating with their customers (Sensis 2010). Some 6 in 10 mentioned that they were responding to comments about their business published on social media platforms, and only 17% of the entire respondents confirmed that they formulated some sort of a digital strategy – with 33% of them incorporating a social media component in it. The results in the 2011 Sensis report are higher but not significantly different, with only 18% of SMEs using social media for business purposes (Sensis 2011). In light of these low participation figures, it is interesting to mention another finding from the 2010 report, which focuses on the target audience of SMEs. It was reported that 'businesses were most likely to make a sale to customers relatively close to them' (p. 28). This statement emphasises the importance of understanding and revealing the local community, which is a target that can be achieved effectively via social media platforms (Smith et al. 2008).

Clearly, STEs usually have their own organisational methods and are mostly family-run businesses with insufficient IT knowledge and resources. This situation makes it more difficult for them to adapt new technologies or innovations. In Australia, both the ICT infrastructure and the level of ICT skills among STEs are commonly found to be limiting factors that affect adoption. Many of the authors mentioned in this section recognise the importance of ICTs to the operational success, information exchange and relationship building of STEs, and suggest ways to overcome the adoption obstacles.

2.12 Small Tourism Accommodation Providers in Australia

This section provides a background to the Australian accommodation sector. As previously mentioned, small tourism enterprises represented by hotels, motels and hostels are the main three accommodation types that will be examined in this study, each with its unique

characteristics and business challenges. Notably, the Australian tourism accommodation sector is varied and includes properties in a wide range of quality and price levels, from hostels, motels and backpackers for the budget-conscious travellers, through to pub hotels that focus on the entertainment factor, to luxury resorts and big international hotel chains (Richardson, 1999; AHA 2009; Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995; Knox 2008; Roberts & Jago 2007).

Hotels in Australia can be divided into accommodation hotels and traditional pub hotels, where the emphasis is on the bar and the gaming facilities (AHA 2009). The AHA report summarises several points with regard to the industry size, the role of the hotels in the community and the outlook for the near future. Some of the key points are:

- the majority of hotels in Australia are small, with up to 30 employees
- in the pub hotels, most of the income comes from selling alcoholic beverages, with accommodation providing a secondary source of income. The estimated total spending with this group per year is $A12 to $A13 billion
- hotels play an active role in community life by organising theme nights to the public, as well as by sponsoring sporting and community groups
- the industry has matured from the minimal income growth in the past 25 years
- employment levels are expected to remain stable over the next three years.

Hostels in Australia are either privately owned or belong to the Youth Hostel Association (Loker-Murphy & Pearce 1995). The authors highlight the origins of the association as the initiative of a German school-teacher who convinced the authorities to open a youth hostel inside a castle in 1909, leading to 2124 hostels twenty years later. In Australia, the YHA started its activities in 1939. It has 100 hostels and 60,000 members as of 2011 leading to 1.5 million overnight stays annually (YHA 2011). In contrast, luxury hotels in Australia contribute to the overall market competitiveness due to their steady growth between 1990 and 2000 (Knox 2008). The author claims that the luxury hotel sector is an important segment of the Australian tourism industry due to its strong influence on price competitiveness and in the provision of tour packages.

The needs and preferences of guests in Regional Australia's 3- and 4-star motels were examined by Roberts and Jago (2007), who noted that most consumers wanted the hotel room to look and feel like their own home. Different variations were found between groups of

travellers, from business travellers who placed more emphasis on space rather than on price, to leisure travellers who were looking for valuable offers and preferred sofa beds rather than low cost options. The authors suggest that motel owners needed to refurbish their properties to allow greater flexibility, so that both business and leisure guests' preferences will be addressed (2007).

The Ibis World Industry Report (Allday 2012) presents a situational analysis of motels in Australia and highlights the fact that motels operate in a declining industry due to strong competition from other types of accommodation, that over the years upgraded their product offerings to become more attractive to potential guests. According to the report, there are 1941 motels operating in Australia as of 2012, mostly in New South Wales and Victoria, with an expected negative annual growth of 0.2% between 2012 and 2017. Hotels and resorts, on the other hand, can expect an annual growth of 1.5% in the same timeframe. The report mentions that business travellers are the main contributors to this growth, and will be joined by an increased number of international travellers from China and India from 2013 onwards.

2.12.1 Trends in Visitation Numbers

The tourism accommodation industry in Australia has gone through several changes since the early 1950s, as explained by Richardson (1999). The author summarises key points in the history of tourism accommodation providers, claiming that the affordability of cars in the '50s led to a growing demand for different types of accommodation, and especially motels, which significantly improved the level of comfort offered by these establishments. In addition, he mentions the loss of popularity of the old hotels in the post-war era, when new tastes and tourist requirements appeared. These hotels were either refurbished or replaced by new brands including international ones that included the Hilton chain and Accor Asia Pacific (1999). The big hotel chains, together with pricing techniques used by them, as well as the relatively easy entry barrier to the market, made the hotel industry in Australia a highly competitive one (Mia & Patiar 2001).

The 2010 International Visitor Survey displays the summary of visitor nights in Australia by type of accommodation used, showing that 69,928 nights were spent at rented apartments, followed by 52,953 nights at friends' or relatives' houses and only 22,425 nights at hotels and motels (TRA 2011). Dominating the accommodation sector in Australia are the small- and medium-sized hotels, motels and backpackers, especially in suburban and regional areas (Lee-Ross 1998). The author also mentions that the allocation of these businesses across the

country is uneven, with New South Wales leading the list of both large and small-to-medium hotels. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) December quarter 2010 survey on tourist accommodation identified that room occupancy rates for Australian hotels, motels and serviced apartments was 66.3%. This figure represents an increase in room occupancy for seven out of Australia's eight states and territories, with Western Australia experiencing the biggest increase of 3.9% (ABS 2010). According to this survey, the average length of stay in the December quarter 2010 was 2.3 days. In the March quarter 2012 report, the ABS presents a trend estimate of total accommodation takings for hotels, motels and serviced apartments that is increased by 1.2% to $2214.4 million compared with the December quarter 2011. However, the room occupancy rate during this time remained unchanged (ABS 2012). *The Age* reported in 2011 on a crisis in the Australian Tourism Industry caused by a steep decline in international visitors, as well as an increase of Australians taking a holiday overseas (The Age 2011). The paper highlights reasons such as the strong Australian dollar, as well as attractive sporting events overseas such as the Rugby World Cup in New Zealand, as the main reasons for the crisis.

2.13 A Conceptual Framework for Investigating Social Media Adoption by STEs

Social media is a new phenomenon, which is becoming important to businesses in general and tourism entities in particular. This trend is evident in recent marketing campaigns of DMOs such as Tourism New Zealand (focusing on social media in their 3-year marketing plan), Mexico Tourism Board (collaborating with Quepasa, one of the world's biggest Latino social networks), Hawaii Tourism (that sponsored familiarisation tours to leading travel bloggers) and Tourism Queensland with its post-floods media tours (Ward 2010; Eye for Travel 2009; Scarborough 2009; Nancarrow 2011). STEs as small family-run business entities have been noted to encounter limitations in their adoption of ICT. These businesses are notorious for not having sufficient IT knowledge and limited access to appropriate resources (Franch et al. 2005; McGrath et al. 2006; Ozgener and Iraz 2006).

Social media is one of the recent developments of Web 2.0 and can be defined as information systems in which users diffuse and gather information to and from other users (Kim et al. 2010). Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that social media is represented by a long list of delivery platforms that include blogs and social bookmarking websites, social networking websites, as well as eCommerce communities. Of these delivery platforms, Facebook is used in this study due to its popularity in Australia and worldwide (Nielsenwire 2010). In

Australia, the most common small business use of social media is to maintain a brand page on Facebook (Sensis 2011). Some studies have examined the use of social media amongst Australian STEs and reached a diverse set of conclusions. For instance, Sellitto et al. (2010) found that only 10% of Australian STEs used social networking websites for marketing purposes. Shin (2010) examined business-to-business interaction and collaboration to find that it was not linked to social media by the respondents, despite the strong potential that such platforms have in creating a meaningful community for information exchange. Breen et al. (2010) noted that social networks are considered a relatively weak channel for learning and information seeking. However, the authors noted that the respondents 'preferred learning from friends and colleagues' (p. 8), which makes their reaction to social media surprising considering the word of mouth power of such platforms (Mangold & Faulds 2009). This finding tends to reiterate Braun's (2003) suggestions regarding the digital gap among these businesses and the need for a learning process.

Clearly, the literature in the area of social media usage among STEs is limited, even though this new phenomenon is becoming important to businesses. Although the research around social media marketing for tourism businesses has been noted, research has yet to focus on the implementation of social media amongst small firms in the context of adoption by Australian STEs. Indeed, like any innovation, the challenge in understanding the methods through which Australian STEs can use social media, as well as the reasons behind these methods, are desirable. Studies examining Facebook usage by Australian STEs are currently nascent, leading to a limited understanding of the potential that this platform can offer. With this lack of information, it is also difficult to review the STEs performance through their social media presence – from a strategy, resources or ICT skills perspective. Providing a set of recommendations and guidelines to simplify the process is, of course, difficult without this initial exploration.

Another issue associated with the advent of social media relates to fans or users and their interactions with the social media presence of Australian STEs. Understanding the user experience is important in also understanding STEs social media presence. Knowing what users appreciate about a business' social media presence is equal to their appreciation or criticism of a website (Flavian et al. 2006) or a TV program (Walsh & Gentile 2001). Users have all sorts of reasons to create a social media account, to 'Like' a page on Facebook or to contribute to a discussion, be they associated with either extroverted and introverted users (Zywica & Danowski 2008), or in the context of social surveillance, which allows the user to

locate old friends or colleagues (Joinson 2008). Therefore, there will be varied perceptions associated with social media presence, and these perceptions can be used to determine the effectiveness of an STE's presence. Hence, the research questions directing the study focus on an STE's business presence and the perceptions of their fans in the social media sphere through Facebook adoption. Two main questions are proposed:

The first research question addresses:

How and why is Facebook being used by Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of social media? These STEs will be the early adopters of Facebook using the platform as a new business tool. In his *Diffusion of Innovation* theory, Rogers (2003) describes the early adopters as people who feel more comfortable with new ideas and who use recent innovations to improve their business. The early adopters are usually respected by their peers, and are perceived as opinion leaders. Therefore, understanding and documenting their social media (Facebook) behaviour and practices assists non-adopting STEs who wish to commence using social media by providing them with relevant examples, recommendations and practices with regard to adopting social media.

The second research question addresses:

What are the users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented social media presence through the Facebook platform? Users interact with social media in different ways: from social surveillance, which allows the user to locate old friends or colleagues and to learn about their progress in life (Joinson 2008) to a tool for personal positioning (Zywica & Danowski 2008). Therefore, their reactions to the social media (Facebook) presence of STEs will reflect individual motivations, preferences and the expectations they have with regard to visiting the social media page of the business. As such, the capture of these perceptions allows the researcher to capture fans' views on the STE's social media presence.

2.13.1 The Conceptual Framework

The main conceptual areas that will direct the proposed research are the requirements for Australian STEs to implement a social media presence on Facebook and the user perceptions of and expectations from social media. Hence, the proposed conceptual framework embodies two constructs:

STE Adoption

This element of the conceptual framework is associated with the early adopting STEs and how they have incorporated social media into their business strategy, while considering their ICT resources and other unique characteristics (Sharma et al. 2000; Braun 2002; Bastakis et al. 2004; Franch et al. 2005; McGrath et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006; Ateljevic 2007; Monday et al. 2009; Burgess et al. 2009; Au 2010). These smaller types of businesses usually dominate the tourism market and tend to struggle with adopting new technologies. In addition, STEs sometimes suffer from an absence of a managerial vision and a long-term strategy. As suggested by Martin (2004), 'new knowledge-creating managerial skills' (p. 88) have to be developed to assist STE owners facing the new digital age. The social media adoption by STEs in the conceptual framework relates to the areas that include having a strategy of social media usage, resources needed to operate social media (including ICT skills and knowledge) and the social media benefits. Each of these areas of STE adoption is further explained:

Strategy of social media usage

Franch, Martini et al. (2005) argue that many STEs cannot fully appreciate the immense potential that the technology plays in improving their business strategy. These businesses usually adopt a product approach and focus on short-term sales goals, rather than trying to analyse the overall market requirements (Bastakis et al. 2004). Therefore, this study examines whether the participating STEs have adopted a strategy for their social media presence in the light of strategy-related practices that are associated with social media use (Beuker 2009; Owyang 2007; Stelzner 2010; Mayfield 2010; Wilson et al. 2011; Hoffman and Fodor 2010). Social media strategy in this study is defined as the set of activities and actions that the business performs in order to analyse the market it works in and its requirements on the way to achieve long- and short-term goals (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004).

Resources to operate social media; ICT Skills and Knowledge

It was argued by numerous authors that STEs usually have difficulty in adopting new technology and innovations. This difficulty is associated with the firm having a knowledge gap about the innovation and failing to dedicate sufficient resources when adopting it (Franch et al. 2005; McGrath et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). As social

media is an innovation reflecting new Web 2.0 technology, this study incorporates resource availability in the conceptual framework. Resources available relate to the workings of the STEs and the human skills that are required for the maintenance of their social media presence (Evans 2010) to the availability of funds required to enhance and differentiate the business' social media presence from its competitors (Piggot 2011).

STE benefits of social media

Information communication technologies (ICTs), and in particular the internet, are important for tourism businesses in that they assist potential tourists to locate, modify and buy tourism products; and provide tools that expose operators to the global market, which allows them to sell their products worldwide (Buhalis 1998). Buhalis and Law (2008) claim that by using ICT to inform consumers, their interaction with local resources, as well as their ability to find desirable services or products, will be improved significantly. Given the importance of determining the benefits that STEs derive from using social media, this study incorporates a benefits element as part of the conceptual framework. In addition, the study will look for evidence to customer value, which is another business benefit of using ICTs (Monday et al. 2009).

User Perceptions

This aspect of the conceptual framework is associated with the expectations that users have from social media and how they value characteristics such as functional and hedonic benefits (Parra-López et al. 2010). eSatisfaction is also an important aspect of the user expectations (Szymanzki & Hise 2000, Schaupp et al. 2006) and is closely allied to the work of Parra-López et al. Scholars have examined why users engage with social media, and suggest reasons that vary from gaining an evaluative social identity (Lampe et al. 2010, p. 8) to perceived enjoyment (Kim et al. 2010). People make several different uses of social media platforms. For instance, Ames and Naaman (2007) note four uses to the tagging functionality on social photography sites Flickr: organising the photos for future browsing; memory and context (that is, adding a tag that will help the photographer to identify the context in which the photograph was taken); public search and photo pools (that is, help others to find the photo); context and signalling (that is, tagging so that others – mainly friends and family – will learn about the photographer's emotions and attitudes towards the object in the photograph). Due to the above, the researcher

understands that the examined social media pages in this study will be perceived differently by users who will evaluate them through a personal set of satisfaction levels, expectations and goals. Therefore, the conceptual framework under the user perceptions moniker includes user expectations and user value/benefits as subgroups.

Table 2.5 below summarises the insights learned from the literature about the conceptual domains leading this study.

Table 2.5: A summary of the insights regarding the conceptual domains of this study.

Conceptual Domain	Literature Findings	Implication for the Current Study
STE Adoption (including strategy of social media usage by STEs, resources to operate social media, ICT skills and knowledge)	Some characteristics of STEs include being mostly family-run businesses with insufficient IT knowledge, and being resource poor, which makes it more difficult for them to adapt new technologies (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). In addition, STEs tend to suffer from an absence of a managerial vision and a long-term strategy (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004; Ateljevic 2007).	The assumption from the literature is that the STEs will not have a proper social media strategy in place, either because of their structure or due to their lack of resources and IT skills. The interview questions will be tailored around these topics in order to confirm or reject this assumption.
User Perceptions (including expectations from social media and value and benefits of social media)	The benefits the user believes he or she get from using social media (social, functional, psychological and hedonic benefits) are the	If users have different reasons and motivations for using social media then this study will have to examine whether they were fulfilled in

	main reason associated with using social media when planning a trip (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. 2010). Scholars have examined why users engage with social media, and suggest reasons that vary from gaining an evaluative social identity (Lampe et al. 2010, p. 8) to perceived enjoyment (Kim et al. 2010).	the case of the STEs' Facebook pages, and if not – what were the problems that fans experienced while following the pages.

The proposed conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 2.3 and reflects the respective elements of the conceptual framework that guide this study.

Figure 2.3: Proposed conceptual framework directing the study
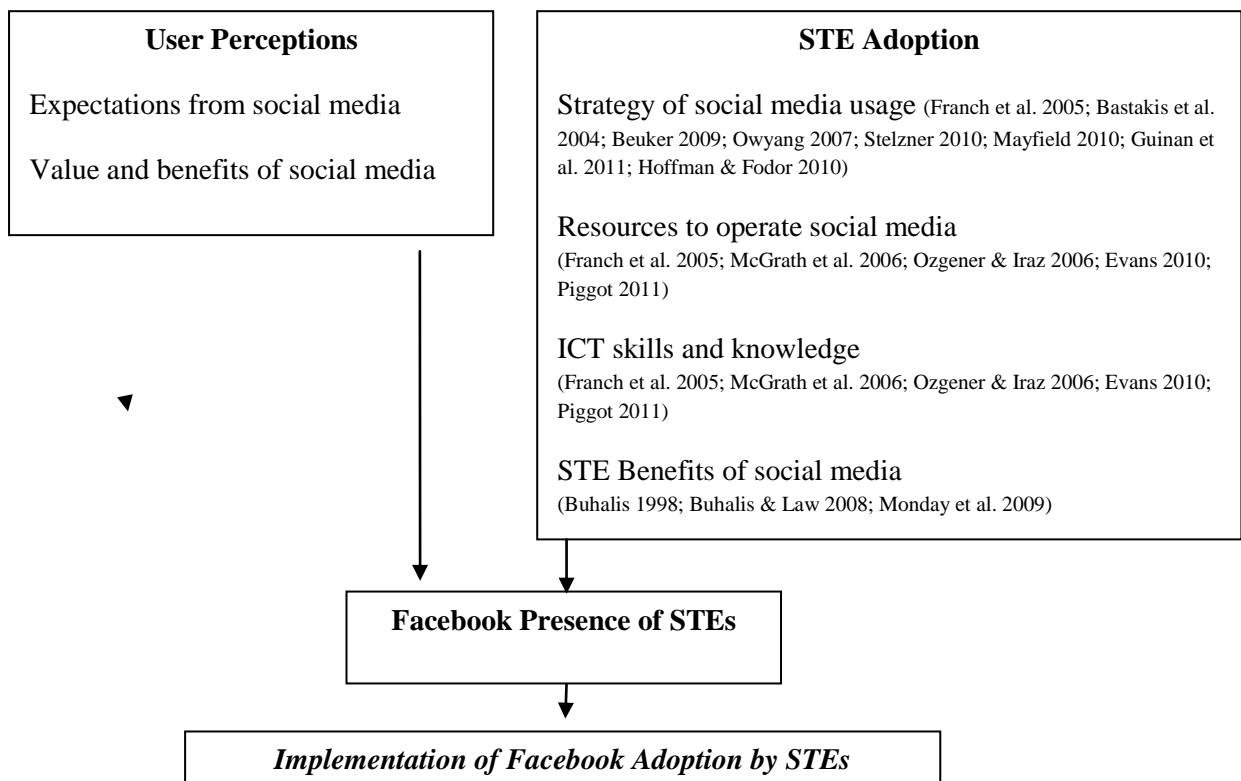
2.14 Summary

Social media has become one of the prominent features of Web 2.0, reflected in its worldwide growth and popularity. Within the literature, the benefits of using social media for marketing and business purposes have been discussed. Fan or user perceptions associated with social media platforms and the motivations in using these channels suggest that users approach social media with a variety of needs and expectations. Facebook and its unique characteristics were highlighted due to its importance as the world's leading social network and were selected for investigation in this study.

The strengthening connection between social media and the global tourism industry were presented in the chapter, demonstrating the potential contribution that social media tools can provide for hotels, airlines and DMOs. STEs, being known for their usually slow uptake of new technologies, have discovered social media and its business benefits too. In Australia, where STEs represent a large proportion of tourism businesses in the country, the uptake of social media is relatively slow and at an early stage of adoption. The concept of early adopters has been discussed, preparing the ground for the analysis taken in the next chapters of those Australian accommodation STEs who are identified as early adopters and maintain a social media presence in order to promote their business.

The existing literature about this particular market segment and its use of social media is limited, leading to the two research questions that are proposed in this study: How/why is Facebook being used by Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of social media? What are users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented a social media presence on Facebook?

The chapter proposed a conceptual framework that will direct the proposed research and included two main constructs. One focused on the adoption requirements of Australian STEs with regard to the implementation of the social media Facebook platform, whilst the other addressed the perceived user expectations when visiting the STE page.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe different research approaches and to further discuss the chosen research method for this study. The chapter commences with an introduction to qualitative methodology, continues with a discussion about the case studies approach, the use of open-ended questionnaires and thematic analysis as the main research methods. The chapter also provides a detailed explanation about the research design.

3.2 Research Methods Considered for the Study

This research examines the phenomenon of social media (Facebook) adoption by STEs which is guided by a conceptual model proposed in the literature chapter. In order to do so, the researcher used a qualitative approach to investigate business and user interactions with social media (i.e. the phenomenon) so as to gain appropriate meanings and interpret findings in context (Denzin & Lincoln 2003). Qualitative research usually adopts an interpretive or critical social science approach to investigations. Positivism, which demands from the researcher to be objective and to use formalised techniques in his or her work, 'relates to the facts or causes of social phenomena and attempts to explain causal relationships by means of objective facts' (Carson 2001, p. 5). Therefore, mathematical methods and statistics are central in the researcher's work under this positivist approach. On the other hand, the objectives of interpretivism are to understand the reality rather than causal relationships, and to embrace the personal involvement and interpretations of the researcher (Carson 2001).

Several research methods are associated with qualitative research. Ethnography refers to the data collection process where the researcher is submerged in the research field for a while 'in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group' (Bryman 2004, p. 267). Cultural understanding is one of the central characteristics of ethnography as a research method, as it is expected to generate theories that are 'situated in local time and space' (LeCompte & Schebsul 1999, p. 9). While this study examines the meanings that people ascribe to their actions (e.g. decisions regarding their social media presence), it is not limited culturally since social media marketing is a global phenomenon, with people and companies using social media for both personal and business purposes (Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010). This study is focused on Australia and STEs in Australia and does not examine the interaction or relationship between businesses or their behaviour in the tourism industry sector. Therefore, the ethnographic method is less appropriate in the context of this study.

A common approach associated with qualitative data analysis is grounded theory that relies on data being analysed in parallel with other data collection activities (Glaser & Strauss 1967). According to the authors, the outcome of grounded theory is expected to be a concept, a hypothesis or a theory. The research questions in a study that uses the grounded theory method have to be plain and broad to allow a flexible exploration of the phenomenon (Leedy 1997). The author explains that it is called a grounded theory as it was created from the data, not the literature. As this study relies on the literature as a basis for underpinning the research questions and developing the conceptual model, and since it does not aim to develop a new theory, the researcher will not implement the method of grounded theory in this study.

Indeed, qualitative research tends to 'turn the world into a series of representations' (p. 4) which make the investigated phenomenon visible and understandable. In such research, concepts are general, serve as a guide to an empirical investigation and do not dictate fixed structures as is encountered in the quantitative method (Bryman, 2004). Qualitative researchers investigate the ways in which people experience the world by using an interpretive approach (Gomm 2004), and as this study examines how businesses and their prospective clients interact with each other on the Facebook social media platform, the researcher believes that an interpretive framework is the most appropriate.

3.2.1 Interpretivism and Case Studies

The main objective in using an interpretivist research approach is to understand the world rather than to explain the situation, which is the goal of a positivist research (Bryman 2004). Subjectivity is crucial to interpretivist researchers, who treat individuals from the society as meaningful players who can modify social structures (Miles & Huberman 1994). The researcher believed that there is more than a single explanation as to why and how small tourism businesses use social media. A collection of different case studies across a set of early adopters allowed the researcher to capture the perceptions of the STEs in order to uncover aspects of the phenomenon being investigated. Case studies help the researcher to 'explore a single entity or phenomenon ("the case") bounded by time and activity (a program, event, process, institution, or social group) and collect detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time' (Creswell 1994, p. 12). Yin (2003) establishes his approach to case studies on the constructivism research paradigm, which brings the researcher and the participant closer to allow creation of meaning. He claims that case studies should be used in some of the following circumstances:

1. When the 'how' and 'why' questions comprise the focus of the research.

2. When manipulating the responses and behaviours of the participants is impossible.

3. When the examined phenomenon requires a discussion around the context in which it exists.

4. When the limits between the phenomenon and the context are not clear.

Case studies allow a holistic investigation of a phenomenon (Tellis 1997), as in the case of social media adoption by STEs, where the analysis tries to explain the Facebook presence based on the perceptions of both a business and user's point of view. Indeed, the concept of social media in general is a holistic phenomenon, which can include different aspects of social public relations, social media marketing, social recruitment and corporate social responsibility (Guarda 2011). According to Yin (2003), there are several types of case studies, including explanatory, exploratory and descriptive. This study uses a descriptive case study approach, as it explores the social media adoption by STEs (the phenomenon being investigated) and the context in which it happened. In addition, a multiple case study approach was chosen rather than a single case, which allows the researcher to confirm similar outcomes or to predict 'contrasting results but for predictable reasons' (p. 47). The case studies presented in this research reflect the social media presence of STEs on the Facebook platform by using multiple sources of data. These data sources are based on the interview responses from the STE managers, a review of the hotel's website, and an analysis of the Facebook page. Tellis (1997) suggests that by using these multiple sources of data and by discussing the interactions between them, case studies can create a voice to the voiceless and the weak. In this study, STEs appear to be the weakest link in the tourism industry with regard to low adoption rates of the Facebook social media platform.

Benbasat, Goldstein and Mead (1987) suggest that researchers usually need to capture the knowledge of the practitioners in order to develop or propose theories. In addition to developing theories from practice, the authors suggest that choosing a case study strategy for research will allow the researcher to answer the 'how' and 'why' questions which cover 'the nature and complexity of the processes taking place' (p. 370). Furthermore, the authors indicate that case studies are suited to the investigation of new or emerging areas of interest in which there is a limited academic knowledge. Clearly these reasons for using the case study approach in this research are also applicable as the study deals with a dynamic

phenomenon that has not been researched heavily until now and asks 'how' and 'why' questions in order to create an understanding of the phenomenon, and to subsequently propose an implementation model.

Flyvbjerg (2006) discusses five misunderstandings about case studies and proposes a practical approach to correcting these misunderstandings, arguing that investigators can include case studies in order to gain insights and achieve informative conclusions. Flyvbjerg suggests that:

1. Despite the common assumption that theoretical knowledge is more valuable than practical knowledge provided by case studies, context-dependent case studies are needed to develop the researchers' skills, just like any other professionals. In this research, practical case studies examining the issue of social media adoption will assist the researcher in understanding the phenomenon from a theoretical perspective.

2. While some claim that a scientific development cannot occur with just a single case study, choosing the right case study using the most appropriate strategy will determine if it contributed to the development of the research or not. This study uses 8 in-depth case studies to capture perceptions that reflect on the current phenomenon of social media adoption by Australian accommodation STEs.

3. A common misconception of case studies is that they are less effective than other research methods when it comes to hypothesis testing and theory building. However, generalisation is required when testing a hypothesis and that relates directly to case studies and their selection. This study does not aim to build a new theory or test an existing one. The implementation framework proposed can potentially be used for testing.

4. Some scholars believe that the researcher is biased by the case studies. Flyvbjerg, on the other hand, claims that the opposite is correct: it is falsification, not verification, which derives from case studies. He suggests that case studies can reveal wrong assumptions and make researchers revise their hypothesis. The case studies in this thesis capture positive and negative perceptions of STE adoption of the Facebook social media platform, allowing the researcher to reflect on these findings.

5. Lastly, another misconception is that it is difficult to summarise a case study to a form of a theory. Flyvbjerg suggests that summarising a case study will damage its value;

keeping it dense will ensure that meaningful data will not diminish. Forming a theory is not the goal of this research. Case studies are presented as a narrative that describes the perceptions of STE adoption of the Facebook social media platform.

The case study research process begins with collecting a substantial amount of data from the participants, usually where the researcher spends time interacting with them. Then the data is examined in order to find themes and patterns to describe the phenomenon investigated; and finally, a report documents the findings using an analytical narrative tone and style (Leedy 1997).

3.3 Research Design

The research was conducted in three stages, with each stage explained in the following sections. Understanding the why and how of STE adoption of Facebook as well, captured user perceptions of the fans of these STEs, and enabled the development of an implementation model. In this study, an implementation model is a suggested set of components aimed at simplifying the process of adopting an ICT innovation, or re-visiting a previous adoption of that innovation in order to improve its performance. In general, the research relied on data collection techniques that include semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires and the analysis of social media content post by either the STEs or the fans.

3.3.1 Developing the Conceptual Framework

This research design stage, which is grounded in the literature, developed a conceptual framework that acts as the basis for guiding the research and allowing the development of an STE implementation model. Dueker (1990) claims that any implementation of a new technology can be portrayed as an endpoint through a set of different events. These events, together with lessons and experiences of the target audience, can be synthesised to form an implementation model (Audet & Paris 1997). The conceptual model documents the boundaries of the research across two identified domains (user perceptions and STE adoption) that are precursors to understanding the Facebook presence of the STEs. Using the conceptual model, the researcher discusses the challenges and resources of STEs in Australia to develop a social media presence, and brings to light findings from user satisfaction studies of ICT environments in general and social media environments in particular. An abridged version of the conceptual framework from Chapter 2 is depicted in Figure 3.1 and provides a

guide for the research, and will serve as a solid basis for better understanding and interpreting the data.

User Perceptions	STE Adoption
Expectations from social media	Strategy of social media usage
Value and benefits of social media	Resources to operate social media

Facebook Presence of STEs

Implementation of Facebook Adoption by STEs
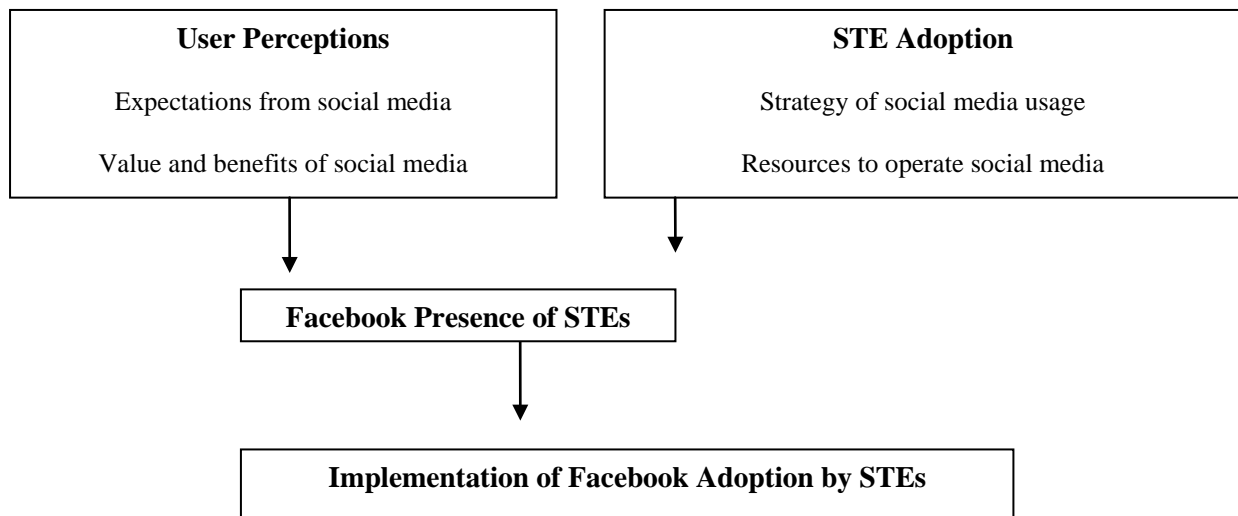
Figure 3.1 The study's conceptual framework (abridged from the literature review chapter)

This study is designed to identify considerations and influences in the Facebook presence of Australian accommodation STEs, as well as to capture user reactions to these Facebook presences. The findings of the study will lead to the development of an implementation model that can provide STEs with good practices based on theoretical concepts to better operate Facebook adoption.

3.3.2 STEs' Case Studies: Analysing Practices and Motivations for Using Facebook

This research design stage is comprised of three steps: examining the business background; discussing the Facebook page of that business; and conducting interviews with the business managers, owners or marketing representative. The goal behind these steps was to answer the first research question, asking how and why Facebook was being used by Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of the social media platform. The goal was to reveal practices and motivations in managing a Facebook presence by engaging with STEs directly and collecting data which is based on their daily social media routine. The components of the case studies are now described.

3.3.2.1 The Business Background

An overview of the business was provided by visiting the official STE website. Some of the business features that were identified in this section were the size of the business, its target audience and the main product offered by the business. The researcher also visited the websites of destination marketing organisations (DMOs), to learn about the region in which the business was located. In addition, the interview sessions with the personnel of the STEs confirmed and/or expanded on some of the background information about their STEs.

3.3.2.2 The Facebook Page

The researcher reviewed the Facebook page of the STE in order to identify aspects of its Facebook presence to inform notable questions that could be asked during the interviews with the STE managers. Web applications such as games or competitions were examined as part of the page features that were either third party applications or those which were created by available Facebook functions. The adoption of Facebook applications is a strong indicator to how entertaining a page is for its user community, hence the importance of their examination in this study (Munoz & Towner 2010). Also examined were the types of content published on the page, in order to learn about the hotel's target audience and its main products – this examination also assisted in supporting some of the business background. The researcher also examined the number of fans the page had; the number of photos and the themes that they display (as part of the content examination); and the scope of the information sections. Finally, the researcher examined the user participation on the Facebook page, which is an indicator of feedback, and the continuation of the discussion (Brogan 2007).

3.3.2.3 Interviews with STEs

Interviews with the selected STEs' owners/managers were conducted, in order to answer the first research question that related to why and how Facebook was being used by Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of social media. It was important to understand those STEs from the unique point of view of their managers and owners, in order to identify the perceived value of the Facebook platform for them. This allows the implementation model to take into account the special characteristics, limitations and needs of the local STEs. Interviews were chosen as a method due to their flexibility, which makes them the most popular method in qualitative research (Bryman 2004). The consciousness of individuals in the research, as expressed via their words, 'gives access to the most complicated social and

educational issues, because social and educational issues are abstractions based on the concrete experience of people' (Seidman 2006, p. 7). Therefore, the researcher reasoned that the perceptions of STE managers would bring to light their unique reasons for adopting a Facebook presence, as well as to identify the relevant issues and reasons for adoption.

The interviews were semi-structured in order to provide the researcher with a higher degree of flexibility, according to the interaction with the participant (Williamson 2000). Semi-structured interviews generalise the process of creating new research ideas and insights, encourage diversion from the planned set of questions in order to understand what the participant values as meaningful and important, and lead to richer answers (Bryman 2004). This assisted the researcher to compare responses from different STEs in order to receive a clearer picture of the situation. Due to geographic limitations, interviews were conducted via the telephone or face-to-face. The interviews were subsequently transcribed with the data categorised and coded in order to be used later for thematic analysis. The categorised and coded approach assists with a conceptual organisation of the data to better understand the relationships between them (Williamson & Bow 2000).

Based on the conceptual framework, the interview questions (see Appendix A) covered issues related to the four main areas. The first area addressed whether there was a strategy in place for using the Facebook social media platform that STEs had developed in the light of strategy-related good practices for social media usage (Beuker 2009; Owyang 2007; Stelzner 2010; Mayfield 2010). The second area examined whether STE managers and owners had the appropriate resources needed to implement and operate social media, such as having a dedicated budget (Piggot 2011). The third area focused on whether STE managers and owners had appropriate ICT skills and knowledge that are important to using social media for marketing and business activities (Evans 2010). And the fourth area dealt with the business benefits that are derived through the adoption and diffusion of a new innovation such as social media by an industry group (Buhalis 1998; Buhalis & Law 2008; Rogers 2003; Monday et al. 2009). The questions were formed considering the good practices for social media use, which were discussed in the literature review (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010; Solis 2010; Novak 2010; Brogan 2007).

To make sure the questions were valid and relevant, the researcher discussed them with several tourism associations such as the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) and the Backpacker Operators Association (BOA), which also assisted in the selection of the study's

STEs (see 3.3.3 Selection of STEs). These organisations understand the importance of social media marketing for small tourism operators, being aware of the challenges some of the STEs might experience with adopting this new channel. Therefore, their feedback on the proposed interview questions was an important iterative process undertaken with these tourism associations. The researcher also presented the questions to a group of 5–8 higher degree university students to determine if the questions were understandable to people from various backgrounds and with different levels of IT skills.

3.3.3 Selection of STEs

The participating STEs (see Table 3.2) were located by using the search engine of Facebook, which is the social media platform used in this study. The search terms used were "hostel", "hotel", "backpackers" and "lodge". The selection process occurred in July 2010, when the majority of Australian accommodation STEs *did not* have a Facebook presence. This is significant, as Tourism Research Australia reports that there were 4279 accommodation providers operating in Australia in 2010 (TRE 2011). Considering Davidson et al.'s findings, 90% of these businesses could be counted as small accommodation providers. Notably, it can be confidently assumed that STEs with a Facebook presence at this time can be clearly grouped as being early adopters of the platform and suitable for selection as part of the study. The researcher initially identified a total of 81 Australian accommodation STEs that had a Facebook presence. Of these, only 19 had a Facebook page that had a relatively notable degree of interactivity where a page had at least several posts that were published by the business (rather than just one or two posts). The businesses were selected on the basis of the number of followers they had, which indicated the engagement level and popularity of the brand in social media. This method was implemented in other Facebook-related studies, such as in Yu et al. (2011) research about restaurants using Facebook. The authors selected their sample based on the number of Facebook fans the restaurant had as it indicated a higher level of engagement. Overall, the researchers contacted all of the 19 STEs that had a Facebook presence to see if they wished to participate in the study. It was, at times, difficult to convince many of these STEs to find the time to participate in the study; however, 9 agreed to be interviewed, with the thesis writing up only 8 case studies – one of the participants did not want to sign the ethics form and was thus excluded. Eisenhardt (2002) proposes that theory and/or models can be built from case study research and that a selection of 4–10 studies as being optimal for investigating a research phenomenon. Overall, the researcher was able to

include a selection of accommodation STEs in the study, covering the different types of accommodation providers in Australia (hotels, motels and backpackers).

In addition, the researcher contacted several tourism associations in Australia and asked them to nominate the businesses that were considered early users of social media. Those organisations were the Youth Hostel Association (YHA), the Backpacker Operators Association (BOA) and the Accommodation Association of Australia (AAA). Some of these organisations nominated accommodation STEs that had been previously identified by the researcher through use of the initial Facebook search. With the current lack of a similar study into social media presences of STEs, the researcher could not consider other approaches for locating businesses for the interviews. Using former selection methods such as tourism brochures and/or telephone books were inappropriate in this instance, as they do not indicate whether the business is involved in social media or not.

Table 3.2 Details of Participating STEs

	STE Location	Description	Number of Facebook Fans*
STE 1	Portsea, Victoria	The hotel is located in Portsea, a seaside town near the Point Nepean National Park. It employs 20 full-time staff throughout the year, with an additional 100 casual staff during the summer months.	1876
STE 2	Gympie, Queensland	This 11-room hotel is located in Gympie, a regional city 160 km north of Brisbane. A total of 12 people are working in the hotel, some casual and some permanent employees.	967
STE 3	Hahndorf, South Australia	This hotel is located in Hahndorf, a small town that is South Australia's oldest German settlement. It contains several types of accommodation, two bars and a gaming club with 33 machines.	315

STE 4	A Victorian National Park	This Youth Hostel Association (YHA) hostel is located in a rural township that is adjacent to a national park, one of Victoria's main tourist attractions. The hostel, which includes four different room types, is powered by solar electricity.	49
STE 5	Merimbula, New South Wales	Merimbula is a holiday town in the Sapphire Coast region of New South Wales. The motel employs one full-time worker.	366
STE 6	Albany, Western Australia	The backpacker hostel is located in Albany, Western Australia's sixth-largest city. It employs two full-time employees.	450
STE 7	The Red Centre, Northern Territory	This remote resort is located in Australia's Red Centre, an hour's drive from Alice Springs. The resort employs between 6 and 16 workers at different times of the year.	145
STE 8	Mount Gambier, South Australia	This country hotel is located near Mount Gambier in South Australia. It employs 14 people, including the couple that owns it.	1183

*Fan numbers as of the research evaluation day

3.3.4 Thematic Analysis of Case Studies

The data collected for each business was summarised in a case study format, using a narrative tone and style that shed light on the research phenomenon (STEs' adoption of social media). The main goal was to present the perceptions of the interviewees in a format such that readers of the study could get a closer view of the phenomenon (Leedy 1997). The coding of data is the first step in the process of thematic analysis. In this analysis, the researcher looked for themes that emerge from coded case study data as being central to the description of the investigated phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman, 1997). The goal in thematic analysis is to be able to condense complex qualitative data via the identification of main themes that are prominent within that data (Howitt 2010). It is a 'form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis' (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane

2006, p. 82). The approach taken in this study was a theory-driven thematic analysis, where the researcher used the existing literature as overarching categories under which newly identified or emergent themes can be grouped (Howitt 2010). This approach contrasts with the data-driven one, where the emergent themes rely purely on the collected data, and the approach rejects the theoretical interest of the researcher in the field of study (Braun & Clarke 2006). By using a theory-driven thematic analysis the researcher was able to monitor and minimise bias.

3.3.4.1 How Themes Were Identified

Eisenhardt (2002) suggests that researchers need to examine the case data for cross-case patterns or dimensions in the analysis process in order to overcome difficulties in processing the information. In this study, the researcher coded the individual cases based on the main themes (or concepts/dimensions) that were identified as part of the conceptual framework. The main themes were Strategy, Resources, ICT Skills and Business Benefits, which formed the four areas under which findings were further categorised.

Each case study generated two tables that summarised the identified themes of each case study. One table recorded all the main themes that were identified across all the case studies, and a second table recorded the themes according to the different accommodation providers (see Appendix C). This within-case data is mainly descriptive, but is essential for the researcher as it assists him or her to deal with the large amount of data collected (Eisenhardt 2002). These tables were used by the researcher in the coding and concept identification processes, as they managed to present and group responses in a manageable and useful visual manner.

Shaping concepts was the next stage of analysis, via several comparisons between the responses in the cases and the conceptual dimensions that started to emerge earlier. This process, as suggested by Eisenhardt (2002), involves deciding on the definition of the dimension (or construct), and looking for a solid proof for the presence of that dimension in each case. Finally, the identified concepts were compared to the relevant literature. In this study, the researcher constantly compared the cases to the literature associated with social media, as well as STEs and ICT adoption, to identify whether the new findings had support in the literature, contradicted it or uncovered something new.

The steps taken by the researcher in the thematic analysis process of case studies followed Eisenhardt (2002), and included:

1. looking for cross-case patterns or dimensions within the data
2. generating tables for within-case data; coding the data; and beginning to form sub-themes
3. shaping concepts: expanding on the findings from the data in further detail
4. comparing concepts to the literature.

3.3.5 User Questionnaire: Capturing User Perceptions of Social Media Presence

This stage of the study allowed the researcher to answer the second research question in that it captured the perceptions of people that were signed-up Facebook fans of the Australian accommodation STEs that had implemented a social media presence. The stage started with an online open-ended questionnaire that was filled in by the fans of the examined Facebook pages; continued with phone interviews with a further eight of the participants; and concluded with a thematic analysis of the data. The interviews supported the open-ended questionnaire responses by allowing the researcher to speak directly to the users and to gather their feedback on the pages, which is based on their user experience.

Links to an online questionnaire were posted by 6 of the 8 participating STEs on their Facebook pages, inviting their fans to participate – two of the STEs did not wish to participate in this component of the study. The rationale behind this approach was to examine the user experience and the effectiveness of the Facebook pages, using the opinion of their real users, who were familiar with the content that appeared on the pages. Because of their ongoing interaction with the investigated medium, these users are likely to identify issues related to e-satisfaction (Szymanski & Hise 2000), as well as user engagement, which are relevant to the second research question of this study (What are the users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented social media presence on Facebook?).

Open-ended questionnaires are considered to be useful during the process of information systems development and implementation as they provide data about user satisfaction (Williamson 2000). This will assist one of the main aims of this research in developing an implementation model for Facebook adoption by STEs, as user satisfaction and perceived

enjoyment are important considerations in the maintenance of social media presences (Kim et al. 2010; Lin & Lu 2011).

The questionnaires were hosted in SurveyMonkey.com, a web questionnaire tool that generates useful graphical reports immediately upon receiving responses. Web questionnaires have faster response times than postal questionnaires and are preferred when trying to reach respondents in diverse geographic locations (Bryman 2004). They are also cheaper to administer as the researcher does not have to face printing and data entry costs (Wright 2006). In addition, online questionnaires are perceived as more important and enjoyable than questionnaires in other formats (Edmonson 1997), which may increase the number of responses, as well as their accuracy.

Some of the disadvantages of online questionnaires include not knowing enough about the characteristics of the people participating in the questionnaire, which may lead to sampling issues (Wright 2006). The author also mentions the problem of inviting users to participate in the questionnaire without being perceived as a spammer who accesses the online community and posts what many users see as unwanted email advertisements. However, this research avoids this issue by having the STE managers or owners directly invite their Facebook fans to participate – rather than the researcher as someone foreign to the community inviting participation. Questionnaire distribution via Facebook has become widely used in recent years, mainly due to Facebook's capability to target specific demographics that the researcher is interested in (Heckman & Heckman 2011).

3.3.5.1 The Open-ended Questions

The open-ended questions in the questionnaire were developed based on the Users Perceptions section in the conceptual framework that addressed fan perceptions of social media and benefits of social media. The questions were open-ended to allow users to express their feelings about the Facebook page and their motivations for using it. Listed below are the questions, along with an explanation regarding their relation to the second research question, as well as to the concepts proposed in the framework. Feedback on the open-ended questions was initially gained from the owners and managers participating in the study to whom the survey was sent for approval prior to its posting on Facebook. This allowed any issues with the wording or clarity of questions to be initially determined. The researcher also tested the open-ended questions by publishing the questionnaire on one of the STE's Facebook pages. The responses given from that questionnaire allowed him to modify the questions with regard

to wording and clarity. Then, the revised questionnaire was published on the remaining STE pages.

The following open-ended questions were used to address the 'Perceptions of Social Media' element of the conceptual framework:

1. **Why did you 'like' this page to become a fan?** – This question uncovers how users perceive the Facebook page of the business, as they usually have different perceptions regarding social media and different motivations to join them (Ames & Naaman 2007; Lampe et al. 2010; Joinson 2008).

2. **Why do you think (name of STE) has created this Facebook page?** – This question reveals more perceptions the users have on the Facebook page, this time from the business point of view. Asking users to respond as if they were representatives of the business brings to light a different viewpoint about the page (Ames & Naaman 2007; Lampe et al. 2010; Joinson 2008).

The following open-ended questions were used to address the 'Benefits of Social Media' element of the conceptual framework:

3. **What are the main 2–3 things that you feel this page has given you?** – This is a general question about the value and benefits users feel they are getting from using the Facebook page. The goal is to reveal the social, functional, psychological and hedonic benefits which were found to be the main reason to use social media for tourism purposes (Parra-López et al. 2010), as well as perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Kim et al. 2010). The limitation of 2-3 options was created in order to encourage the completion of the questionnaire. Asking for more answers (or leaving it open) might have made some users hesitant about completing it.

4. **Did you share or are you interested in sharing items from this page with your friends on Facebook? Why are you sharing/not sharing these items?** – This question focuses on the social benefit that was proposed by Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. (2010). According to the authors, for some users the benefit from using social media is the ability to design a personal online presence based on their preferences. Sharing Facebook items with friends (whether it is articles or photos) is one way to do that, as it reflects on the user's personal interests.

5. **Do you believe you could use this page as a tourist guide if visiting the region? Will it be informative enough for your needs? (If not, please explain why.)** – This question

focuses on the functional benefit that was proposed by Parra-López et al. (2010). The benefit of using social media as a practical tool that helps to plan a trip is examined through this question.

6. **Are you interested in following this page just for entertainment, even without planning to stay at the hotel? Explain your answer.** – This question focuses on the hedonic benefit that was proposed by Parra-López et al. (2010). It tries to reveal whether the Facebook page provides value for the users by functioning as a source for entertainment and enjoyment.

The following open-ended questions were used to address the 'e-satisfaction' element of the conceptual framework:

7. **Are you satisfied with the content published on the page? (Content relates to text, photos and videos.) What do you like (or don't like) about the content?** – Information quality is one of the factors that determines e-satisfaction (Schaupp et al. 2006; Szymanzki & Hise 2000) and this question examines this issue by focusing on the content provided by the Facebook page.

8. **Did you find the page fun and interesting to visit? What did you like about it? What do you think can make it better?** Enjoyment was found to be the main reason to join social media by Lin and Lu (2011), and can therefore determine the user's e-satisfaction. This question tries to reveal whether the Facebook page was fun to use, as an indicator of user satisfaction.

9. **Was there anything that you didn't like about the page? What was it and why didn't you like it?** The final question tries to expose those elements that damaged the users' e-satisfaction on the Facebook pages.

3.3.5.2 Thematic Analysis of Fan Responses

Similarly to the analysis of the case studies, the data collected from the online questionnaire was grouped into main patterns and themes, and then analysed using thematic analysis. As explained earlier in this chapter, in this analysis the researcher is looking for themes that emerge as being central to the description of the investigated phenomenon (Daly, Kellehear & Gliksman, 1997). The goal in thematic analysis is to be able to condense complex qualitative data via the identification of main themes that are prominent within that data (Howitt 2010). The approach taken in this study is a theory-driven thematic analysis, where the researcher

uses the existing theories on the field of study as a basis for identifying new themes (Howitt 2010).

In order to complement the view gained from user open-ended question responses and to enrich the data collected, the researcher also analysed fan messages and comments that were posted on the participant STEs' Facebook pages covering a 12-month period (the 2012 calendar year). These comments and posts can be considered uncontrived expressions associated with fans engaging with the STEs' Facebook presence. Comments and posts which were considered too short (less than 4 words) or those that did not align with the conceptual framework and its main themes were not included in the study.

3.4 Research Validity and Reliability

Although validity and reliability are more common in quantitative research, they are reassessed in the context of the qualitative research as well (Golafshani 2003). Joppe (2000) defines reliability in a quantitative research as 'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the population under study is referred to as reliability' (p. 1). Validity according to the latter 'determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are' (p. 1).

The approaches are diverse when it comes to the justification of reliability and validity in a qualitative study. Stenbacka (2001) argues that the idea of reliability in a qualitative study is deceiving and will damage the quality of the findings. She suggests using alternative terms for validity, such as quality or trustworthiness. On the other hand, Patton (2001) claims that reliability and validity are important factors in the design and analysis of any qualitative studies. Mathison (1988) and Patton (2001) encourage the use of triangulation as a method for enhancing the validity and reliability of a qualitative research. As explained earlier in this chapter, triangulation is the combination of a qualitative method with a quantitative one, or a multi-strategy research (Bryman, 2004).

The researcher achieved reliability and validity in this study by examining the phenomenon of STEs' adoption of the Facebook social media platform through mixed data collection methods, as suggested by Mathison (1988) and Patton (2001). One method included manager/operator interviews and an examination of their Facebook presence that were presented as in-depth case studies. Another data approach method used in the study was the online questionnaires that captured fan perceptions of the STEs' Facebook presence. The

Facebook comments posted by the fans of the STEs were also used to support findings. The researcher placed a strong emphasis on collecting rich data from both businesses and users in an effort to gain the representative perceptions of the early adoption STEs. An accurate representation of the examined STEs was achieved with the assistance of several tourism bodies that are familiar with the local industry, as previously explained above. Reliability and validity aspects of the study were also addressed with first-round STE interviews being followed by another round of phone calls in order to get additional data.

3.5 Ethics Approval

Ethics approval was granted twice as the research involved two different interactions with respondents through interviews (the STEs and their Facebook fans) and open-ended questionnaires. Before conducting the interviews and publishing the online questionnaires, the researcher explained the ethics procedure to the participants. Later, the participants were asked to sign a consent form (or to submit their responses as evidence of their agreement with the online questionnaire). In addition, the researcher discussed the structure and duration of the interview, along with the main goals of the study. Participants were informed at this stage of the expected publication date of the thesis and the type of feedback (short printed summary) they would receive as a result of their participation. Leedy (1997) claims that 'no research should ever be conducted under circumstances in which total disclosure of the aims and purposes of the research cannot be set forth – preferably in writing' (p. 116). The steps mentioned above allowed the researcher to address Leedy's suggestion of disclosure by keeping the interview process visible and transparent to the participants.

3.6 Developing an Implementation Model

The three stages mentioned above allowed the researcher to propose an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. The aim of proposing this model is twofold. Firstly, the proposed theoretical implementation model is a rich re-development of the original conceptual framework that has been informed by the perceptions of STEs (case studies) and their users (fan questionnaires and comments). As such, this model can be viewed as a stand-alone outcome of the study. Secondly, the proposed model provides a practical assistance to STEs in developing an effective presence on Facebook, considering their unique needs, resource-poor status, fan preferences and the platform's easy-to-use technological capabilities. The model includes a set of practical recommendations for social media business marketing that is backed by a theoretical framework. The development

of the model proceeded through several iterations (see Figure 3.2) from one stage to the next according to the data collections.

Figure 3.2 An Implementation Model of Social Media Presence

Literature Review	→	STEs' Case Studies	→	Users: Online Questionnaire
↓		↓		↓
Conceptual Framework/Model	→	Updated Model (reflecting STEs' perceptions of their adoption of the Facebook platform)	→	Final Model (informed by the users' viewpoints)
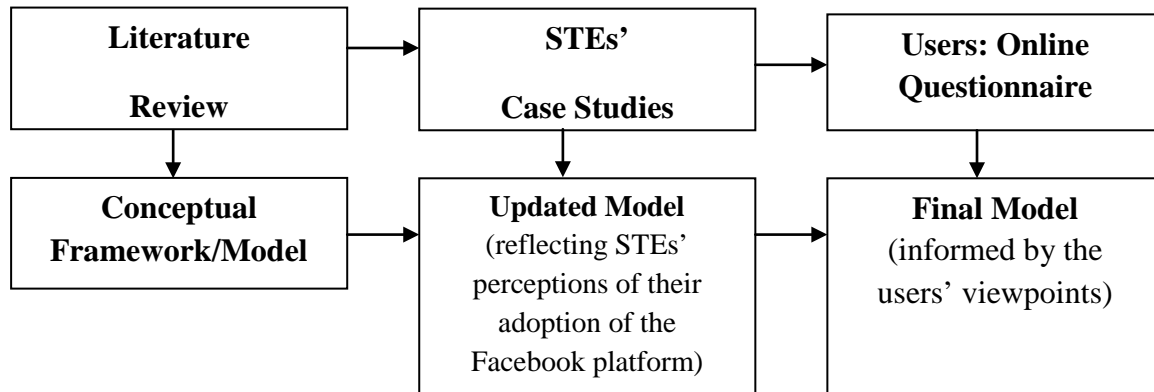
3.7 Conclusion

Qualitative studies investigate the ways in which people experience the world by using an interpretive approach. Since this research evaluates how STEs and their Facebook fans interact online, their motivations, actions and expectations, an interpretive framework was chosen. Case studies and online questionnaires were used, as the research approach for this study requires a holistic investigation. Since there is more than a single explanation as to why and how small businesses use Facebook, the researcher decided to intervene in the reality of the interviewees by using case studies in order to fully understand it. The rationale behind using open-ended questionnaires and posted fan comments was to identify the user perceptions of the STE Facebook pages of those who participated in the study. The thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the case study narratives and the data collected as part of the user perception of the STE Facebook page. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify themes that emerged from examining the data that was deemed central to the description of the investigated phenomenon. These new themes allowed the conceptual framework to be developed and enriched, which contributed to the proposal of an STE implementation model associated with social media presence.

CHAPTER 4: STE CASE STUDIES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter documents the case studies that were used to investigate social media adoption by Australian STEs. The case studies were primarily based on interviews with STE managers and owners, with ancillary sources such as the business website and the examination of STEs' Facebook presence also used.

The case study research process allows the researcher to collect a substantial amount of data from the participants so as to describe the phenomenon investigated. Case studies were chosen as a research method in this thesis as they fit with Yin's (2003) investigative approach that is conducive to allowing the 'how' and 'why' questions of the research to be addressed. Each case study is presented in the following manner and includes a section on:

Business background. The STE website was primarily used by the researcher to gain an overview of the business. Some of the business features that were identified in this section were the size of the business, its target audience and the main product on offer (for instance, hotel rooms or an event venue). In addition, the researcher visited third party websites, mainly of destination marketing organisations (DMOs), to learn about the region in which the business was located. Finally, the interviewees themselves provided background information about the business.

The Facebook page. The researcher reviewed the Facebook page of the business in order to identify different uses and applications of the social media platform by the firm. Documenting the STE's Facebook presence also provided background for the researcher with regard to the notable questions that could be asked during the interviews with the STE managers. Page features that were examined included the applications in place, being either third party applications or those that were created by Facebook. These applications are a strong indicator of how entertaining a page is for its community, hence the importance of their examination in this study (Munoz & Towner 2010). The types of content that were published on the page were also examined, in order to learn about the hotel's target audience and the main products on offer. The researcher also examined the number of fans the page had; the number of photos and the themes that they display (as part of the content examination); and the validity and scope of the information sections (again, as part of the content examination). Finally, the researcher looked at the user participation on the Facebook

page, which can be viewed as an indicator of business feedback and discussion (Brogan 2007).

Results of interviews with STE managers and owners. The STE managers/owners interviews were summarised and presented using an analytical narrative tone and style (Leedy 1997). The interview documented the firm's adoption of the Facebook social media platform. The interview findings are grouped under the categories that comprise the STE adoption section depicted in the conceptual framework proposed as part of the literature review chapter. The reporting categories include: strategy of social media usage; resources to operate social media; ICT skills and knowledge; and business benefits. Finally, a table summarising the findings associated with each case study provides an overview of important social media aspects of each STE.

In order to implement the ethical requirements of this research and to guarantee the anonymity of its participants, the case studies contain pseudonyms to represent the interviewees.

4.2 Accommodation Provider 1

4.2.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 1

The hotel is located in Portsea, a seaside town near the Point Nepean National Park. The Mornington Peninsula is a local tourist area with coastal attractions, wineries and boutique hotels (Visit Victoria 2011). The hotel claims on its website to be a central landmark of the Mornington Peninsula, with several country-style accommodation options, a bistro and a wine bar. It employs some 20 full-time staff throughout the year, with an additional 100 casual staff during the summer months (December, January and February). The marketing manager preferred not to disclose any details about the annual turnover.

The content in the hotel's website suggests that a lot of emphasis is placed on weddings, conferences and other events. This is evident in the detailed Functions page, as well as in the events list on the home page. That, in addition to some of the interviewee answers below, indicates that two of the target audiences for this hotel are comprised of corporations and young couples.

The website also reveals that the hotel has several deluxe suites in addition to the standard rooms, as well as three dining spaces with different menus and design. The wedding section

is actually a whole new website with a different site map, containing pages about reception rooms, menus and entertainment options. That is, other evidence to how central the wedding market is for the hotel.

4.2.2 The Hotel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 1

The page has 1876 Likes (that is followers) at the time of interview. It also displays mobile check-ins to the hotel that stand at 1406 as of that date. The page has seven tabs (that is applications), all produced by Facebook: Wall, Info, Friend Activity, Photos, Discussions, Reviews and Events. The Info page has all its sections updated and detailed, while the Photos page contains some 17 images. This limited number of photos may affect the users' information gathering process, as it presents only a partial view of the hotel. This finding correlates with the limited number of photos that were found on the hotel's official website. The Facebook page is updated at least once a week, and the main topics are dining (special menus, dinner invitations) and events (parties, theme nights and weddings). The users' activity is quite limited when considering the number of followers the page has, with only three comments left by users during the three months before the page examination date. During the same period, four users have posted an update – two of them represent local businesses and so use the page as an advertising platform.

The description part (under Info) displays text that was copied from the website and was not written specifically for Facebook. Visitors who will visit the Facebook page right after they visited the website will most likely see similar information. In addition, the text is very commercial in its style and tone, which may be appropriate for an official website but can be unsuitable for social media purposes (Drell 2011).

The Events tab is empty, although the website clearly displays three upcoming events. Inviting users to click on a navigation tab just to find that it has no content may lead to a negative user experience. In addition, the hotel does not appear to promote what seems to be an important element of its business model.

The About section, which is placed in one of the most prominent areas of the page, contains text that does not mention any reference to hotel accommodation. Instead, it focuses only on the dining and drinking experience of the hotel. This could have been a useful strategy if the main target of the hotel was to sell food and drink. Since this is not the case (as explained by

the interviewee), this text may lead to misunderstandings regarding the main purpose of the business.

4.2.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 1

The following section summarises the interview with Jack (pseudonym), the Marketing Manager of the hotel. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.2.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Jack understands the emerging trend of social media and its importance to the business. He realised that there is *'a strong push towards the online presence'* from the clients, who expressed their desire to engage with the hotel in order to receive more information about the place: *'they want to engage with us online, what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel, whether it be bistro, accommodation, weddings, functions, etc'*. This understanding demonstrates how Jack, as the marketing manager, listens to the needs of the hotel's target audience, which is the basis for any social media activity.

Tracking and monitoring on Facebook are very important to Jack, as he wishes to know more about user behaviour. Jack claims that he uses Google Analytics, as well as Facebook Insights, to track user behaviour: *'I guess we can also track a lot more where people are coming from, and what they are clicking on, and what they are engaging, and how long they are spending with us, so it's very valuable information for us as well as in terms of making future decisions on where we allocate funds in a marketing budget in a digital space.'* By creating this connection between user behaviour and online media spend, Jack demonstrates his understanding of the potential that social media can bring to businesses in general, and to STEs in particular. However, it seems that most of his tracking efforts are focused on the hotel's website rather than its Facebook page. When asked 'how do you monitor your social media activity', he replied: *'Two examples would be our website, we have a very detailed statistic component to that that we can monitor … as far as social media is concerned with Facebook we use Google Adwords.'* While it is true that pay per click (PPC) ads that promote a Facebook page can be tracked to provide useful visitation data, the Google Adwords tool does not focus on Facebook measurement. When asked about Google Insights, which provides extensive data about user participation on a Facebook page, Jack indicated that *'... we're using that and we're using Google Analytics as well, so there's a lot of graphs, and*

charts and numbers …' From this comment it is hard to decide whether he actually uses the tool or not.

As part of his social media strategy Jack wanted to target specific demographics in accordance with the hotel's current offers. For that he started using Facebook Ads: *'We're running an ad on Facebook at the moment targeting the female market with regards to weddings, aged between 18 and 35, who have changed their relationship status on Facebook to "Engaged" … Very specific, very targeted marketing.'* This form of paid advertising works virally by being placed on a Facebook user profile in accordance with the personal preferences and interests of the user (Weintraub 2011). The use of the ads demonstrates Jack's understanding of his target audience, and the basic assumption that not all users want to read the same message.

Jack believes that Facebook predominately targets the younger audience: *'Facebook obviously attracts the younger hotel clientele, so we talk more about events that are of interest to the younger market. Over summer there's a lot of events here that are very specific, targeting (the younger age group). We have a snow party coming up, which we'll be doing a lot of Facebook promotions with it as well.'* He claims that the Facebook page sits within the hotel's marketing strategy in terms of promoting to the younger market, *'especially over summer it will play a vital role, because over summer we appeal more to the younger market.'* For this reason, Jack matches the content that he posts in the hotel's page to the young guests' interests, such as music and parties. He puts an emphasis on sending the right message to the right user, and is aware of the consequences of posting irrelevant updates: *'It's all about sending the right message to the right person in the right time and not alienating somebody with a message that wouldn't be of interest to them that would simply annoy them.'* While it is a positive approach to marketing in general, and to social media content in particular, it is surprising that Jack cannot see the value that the Facebook page can bring to older clientele, considering his familiarity with the platform. If the focus is on the younger crowds, then this should have been emphasised on the hotel's official website as well – which is not the case. The problem that may arise is of older users who will visit the website, click on the link to the Facebook page, and be disappointed by the irrelevant messages, tone and style.

When asked about the limited number of photos that were found on the Photos tab, Jack admitted that more photos are needed (*'I guess we can add more in there … We do have some*

photographers over summer that take some photos on the big events days so we'll probably put some more photos up this year definitely.'). Jack does not upload photos on the page unless they were taken by a professional photographer, which is an important finding. While this approach promises that only high quality photographs will appear on the page, it reduces the quantity of photographs that appear and may affect the overall user experience.

Jack finds it difficult to determine whether Facebook has actually resulted in direct bookings, but feels that it has some sort of an e-commerce impact on the hotel: *'I have no real evidence, but I would be very surprised if we didn't (get bookings). We put a lot of publications out there of events and specials, and I think that it definitely has an impact, no doubt about it. But we don't have a way of directly tracing that, when people ring and book we don't ask where they heard about it all the time.'* Developing a method to analyse Facebook's contribution to bookings in general and web bookings in particular can assist Jack with having clearer answers in this regard. For example, posting special offers with direct booking links or a special phone number from the Facebook page may ease the tracking process.

Looking to the future, Jack will focus on adding content to the page in order to be more prominent on other third party or external Facebook pages *('Keep the growth up on it, it has become an integral part of our marketing strategy, the plan is really to push more and more information through it. The more information we can push on it, the more branding we can get up on other people's pages, the more beneficial it will be for the business.').*

4.2.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Maintaining the page is done from Jack's laptop. He claims that the internet speed in the hotel's area is very good and sufficient for his needs*: 'Yeah, it's ADSL connection here so it's very fast and reliable, more than adequate.'*

Jack does not use any web programs or special software to assist him with maintaining the page, except for an image manipulation tool that is being used on rare occasions: *'I generally go straight to Facebook ... very rarely use an image tool to resize or adjust an image to use on Facebook ... we speak to the basics really.'* Jack considers tools such as TweetDeck and other web programs as complex, which is surprising considering he uses Facebook Ads. The latter is not one of Facebook's most basic features, and is usually used by page administrators with some experience managing their pages. Therefore, by ignoring these third party tools, he potentially misses an opportunity to improve the hotel's Facebook presence.

The hotel has allocated a budget for social media, and in particular for running campaigns using Facebook Ads, indicating a re-direction of resources: *'We're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital.'* Jack claims that around 20–30% of the hotel's total marketing budget goes to social media. This spend is yet further evidence of the central place that social media is taking in the hotel's marketing efforts. However, with such a significant spend, it could have been beneficial to invest in third party applications and tools in order to enhance the page's interactivity (Lin & Lu 2011).

4.2.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Jack feels that he lacks graphic design skills that could have helped him improve the hotel's social media presence: *'The only internal skill that we don't have in the hotel is probably a graphic design resource … if we want to do something that really looks quite snazzy we would outsource that … but everything else we have really got covered internally … most of the tools we use are fairly basic, especially with the social media component … if I have to choose one I'd probably say the graphic design area.'* In addition, Jack finds it difficult to create fresh content on a daily basis: *'The challenge is to make sure that it's always fresh and the content is relevant and accurate … we try and update it as frequently as we can.'* While it is good to learn about Jack's awareness of his weaknesses as the social media administrator of the hotel, it does not seem that he intends to take any actions in order to change this situation but instead prefers to outsource complex projects. Outsourcing content tasks might be a useful way of accessing skills that he does not possess.

4.2.3.4 Business Benefits

As mentioned earlier, Jack claims that there is a strong demand from past and future guests to communicate with the hotel via social networks. Therefore, the extra value for customers is their ability to learn about the hotel, its activities and special events, through a channel like Facebook that they use regularly. Surprisingly, despite the demand that Jack mentioned, the user interaction with the page in terms of comments and responses to the hotel's status updates was minimal, with only three comments left by users during the three months before the page examination date. If, indeed, the demand is high but the user activity is limited, then Jack has to find out what is stopping his community from participating more actively in the discussion – from a strategy, content and feedback perspective (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010; Solis & Mayfield 2010).

Facebook offers Jack an affordable marketing platform that fits into the hotel's economic capabilities (Derham et al. 2011). Therefore, the relative advantage that Jack sees in Facebook is with the fact that it is cheaper to use than traditional media: *'we're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital.'* While it is true that developing and maintaining a brand presence on Facebook is less expensive than on other more traditional media platforms such as the television, the fact that Jack focuses only on this aspect of Facebook as a recent innovation, reveals that he is not fully aware of the social benefits it can bring to the business and its clients. This point may explain the low user activity that the page suffers from.

Jack knows that the hotel's past and future guests want to hear from it directly, and that Facebook can provide a useful solution for that too. If the current problem is that there is a demand from clients for a digital channel of communication with the hotel, then the solution according to Jack is the Facebook page.

The only two difficulties that Jack finds in maintaining the hotel's Facebook page were graphic design and content creation, which suggests that Facebook is easy for him to use. While it is possible to maintain a page on Facebook without having advanced design skills, as most of it is based around textual content and because there are applications that assist those who lack multimedia knowledge, having the ability to create fresh content regularly is important. Both Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) suggest that users will share good, meaningful content – which may lead to the anticipated viral effect. If Jack cannot come up with meaningful content to engage with his audience, then he risks the page being one-sided (that is, serving as a virtual billboard rather than a thriving community). The content difficulty adds to the complexity attribute that Jack feels when maintaining the page.

Jack uses Facebook Ads, which can be modified over and over again based on the campaign's requirements, even during the campaign itself. This benefit of experimental freedom allows Jack to target different segments of the hotel's target audience and to modify the ads without losing money.

Jack tracks the user behaviour via Google Analytics and Facebook Insights in order to make future decisions regarding the hotel's marketing plan, which clearly demonstrates how transparent Facebook is as a recent innovation (Axon 2010; McCarthy 2010). Jack takes these tracking capabilities one step further and links his ads on Facebook to specific landing pages

on the hotel's website, where most of the transactions are done*: 'of course we can track exactly how many people are clicking on those links, we're taking them to a very specific landing page on our wedding site … so we are able to monitor very closely the ROI and the performance of this specific campaign.'* This is a good example of cross marketing between the social media presence and the official website.

4.2.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 1

Table 4.1 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.1: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 1

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Jack recognises the consumer push towards online presence 2. Tracking the page's progress and monitoring user conversations are important to Jack 3. Jack thinks of segmentation when communicating with the hotel's target audience: sending the right message to the right person 4. The hotel's Facebook page is aimed at the younger age groups, as Jack believes that Facebook fits younger audiences 5. Jack cannot tell if Facebook actually contributes to the hotel's bookings, but feels that it does 6. Plans for the future are to grow by adding more content
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. Jack reports on an excellent internet connectivity in the hotel's area 2. No third party tools are used by Jack to assist him in maintaining the page as he finds them complex. The

	only exception is an image manipulation tool 3. The hotel has allocated a special budget for its social media activities
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Difficulties with web design 2. Difficulties with content creation
Business Benefits	1. Past and future guests can find the hotel on Facebook, learn of its facilities and activities and communicate with it directly 2. Saving money on marketing activities 3. Providing guests with the hotel's digital presence that they were looking for 4. Freedom to experiment with ads 5. Good tracking capabilities that enable Jack to do cross-marketing campaigns between Facebook and the website

4.3 Accommodation Provider 2

4.3.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 2

This 11-room hotel is located in Gympie, a regional city 160 km north of Brisbane. Gympie belongs to the touristic Sunshine Coast region and offers its visitors several country experiences such as canoeing and mountain biking (Queensland Holidays 2011). The hotel is a family-owned business that includes a cocktail bar that serves guests and locals alike, an entertainment venue, a restaurant and also boutique accommodation. A total of twelve people are working in the hotel, some casual and some permanent employees. The owner preferred not to disclose details about the annual turnover of the hotel.

The hotel's website tells the story of the hotel in its different forms in the 'About Us' section, going back to 1868. Gympie was then a gold mining town, attracting tens of thousands of people to come and try their luck. The hotel was first opened as a theatre, destroyed in severe

floods in 1875, and was re-built several years later into a two-storey timber structure, maintaining its status as one of the most popular entertainment venues in town. The hotel achieved its current form in 2007 after being purchased by a local family who invested one million dollars renovating it.

A lot of emphasis is put on highlighting previous awards and achievements. The home page, for example, features an online banner stating that the hotel won the 'Best redeveloped licensed premises' and 'Best boutique accommodation hotel' from a leading tourism body in Queensland.

There is a section dedicated to cows in Australia, to emphasise Gympie's status as an important cattle region. The Photo Gallery page highlights some of the hotel's events: many of them are sport-related (for example, The Melbourne Cup or State of Origin).

4.3.2 The Hotel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 2

The page has 967 Likes (followers) at the time of interview. The page contains 15 tabs (applications); some were created by Facebook and others (such as the Welcome tab or the Extended Info tab) by third party providers. This relatively high number of tabs indicates that the page administrator is looking for ways to differentiate the page from competitor pages and to entertain its fans in different ways (Lin & Lu 2011). However, some of the tabs have no content and have to be updated in order to justify their presence on the page.

The Photos tab is the most up-to-date with more than 400 photos in 6 different albums. Most photos include those of guests enjoying the atmosphere at the bar and of food items from the restaurant. No accommodation photos are available. Several photos displayed the severe floods that hit the region in January 2010, which increased the authenticity of the page and strengthened its status as a social arena rather than a commercial billboard. On the other hand, some photos were taken from an image bank, which may affect the genuineness of the page as suddenly it creates an artificial atmosphere. The page administrator tries several ways to engage with his or her fans, including the use of commercial photos, which is a positive approach.

The textual content is focused around the events that are being held at the hotel, from live shows to Christmas and New Year's Eve parties. The tone is friendly and inviting, and there is usually a photo that accompanies the text. Most updates do not include a question that may help generate a discussion, but rather provide the basic details of the event (date, time, artist's

name, ticket price). This behaviour may explain the relatively low user participation on the page. The user activity is quite limited when considering the number of followers the page has, with only three comments left by users during the month before the page examination date. During the same period, two users have posted an update – one of them being an artist who performs at the hotel.

The About section reads: 'One of the best pubs in Queensland situated in the centre of the historic town of Gympie. Accommodation, bars, cocktails, restaurant, live music, bottle shop.' There is a duality in how the page defines itself: at first, the place is presented as a pub. Then the word 'accommodation' opens the second line before 'bars', 'cocktails', and so on. This may cause confusion as to what the place offers its potential clients, as well as what the Facebook page is all about.

4.3.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 2

The following section summarises the interview with Annie (pseudonym), the owner of the hotel. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.3.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Annie's main reason for creating a Facebook presence was the high cost of traditional advertising and the global financial crisis of 2008, which led to her searching for more affordable ways to advertise the hotel: *'people were going out less, and I couldn't afford all the newspapers … so I was looking for other ways to advertise … connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising'*. She sees Facebook as equally important as the hotel's website, and also the email newsletter that she sends to the hotel's database *('Between Facebook, email and the website – we communicate all our offers and events to our customers').* This statement demonstrates that Annie values Facebook as a central platform to communicate with previous guests and to reach new ones, and not just as an experimental marketing tool.

When asked directly about whether she developed a social media strategy for the hotel, Annie spoke about updating times and content preferences *('I update the Facebook page at least once a day, sometimes twice, usually early in the morning or later at night. I think more people see the updates early in the morning or at night as during the day people are at work or school, etc., and don't have as much access to it … Sometimes I will post a link to a news*

article which would interest our customers or even post a joke to make the page more interesting and fun.'). While deciding when and what to post are important elements in the work of a social media administrator, these are only isolated actions rather than a long-term strategy with goals and key performance indicators. From her answer, it is evident that Annie does not have a clear and pre-planned social media strategy for the hotel.

She tracks the page mainly by looking for user comments and/or 'Likes', and also by real-life feedback: *'... I can advertise my events and specials and then you'll notice comments on the page, customers know what's happening ... so we know if they are actually coming without doing any advertising. We know it's working if we're getting business from the special promotions.'* This tracking approach demonstrates how close to the hotel's community Annie is. She looks for direct feedback as a way of learning about the success of the page as an advertising platform. At the same time, Annie also relies on quantitative data for monitoring the page: *'Facebook also emails each week a report on your page on how many fans it's increased by and how many people have visited the page and whatever so I watch that ...'* And finally, Annie visits Facebook Insights to learn more about the users of the page, their geographic locations around the globe and the most popular posts on the page.

Annie claims that she publishes content that covers all of the hotel's offerings: *'I'll put live music or bands that we have coming each weekend ... I might put in what specials we have in the restaurant, I try to do different things, sometimes I promote our accommodation specials (like) $99 for the room and then I'll put an image with that, like a photo of the room.'* This approach demonstrates her strong understanding of the product that she is selling, and also shows her willingness to try and talk about different topics on Facebook, in order to increase the engagement rates with the fans of the page. Annie also shows a good familiarity with content-related good practices for Facebook usage, by indicating her preference for shorter posts *('I don't like to make very long updates, short are better with an image ...')*, and also by not focusing solely on the hotel as a business but rather talking about Gympie, current events and so on *('I try to make it a bit more interesting not just about our hotel but what is happening in the town. I try to look at what my fans want, and not just about me')*. Annie's strong feel for the community value of the page is best explained by this comment: *'It's not just hard sell all the time and they want to feel more like a community and connecting with the business, and they are more likely to make a comment ... it's more like a community page I suppose. I think if you push too much sales at too many posts, you actually lose fans and they will drop off your page.'* These words clearly show how Annie sees Facebook as a social

platform that can generate brand awareness, and not as a traditional advertising tool for pure sales.

Both Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) discuss good practices for content implementation on Facebook, suggesting that users will share good, meaningful content – which may lead to the anticipated viral effect. Annie's answers demonstrate that she is always searching for meaningful content to increase engagement. She even posts jokes to try and attract comments: *'I had a book on jokes for the pub and trivia, and now and again I'd put up a joke or a funny trivia question to do with the pub ... Friday night joke or something ... sometimes they (the users) will comment on that.'*

Annie created a Twitter account for the hotel but she is not happy with its performance, and so chose to focus on Facebook: *'I set that up but it's growing slowly, it's about a 100 (users) or so but hmm ... I don't think it's the right area. I think Twitter is more for big cities than where we are.'*

Looking back at the time since she created the page, Annie feels that Facebook has indirectly contributed to room bookings *('It has helped with our bookings, but I suppose accommodation does come from the website mostly as people search online for accommodation. Facebook is good for promoting events and restaurant specials, etc.').* This answer reveals Annie's expectations from Facebook as a business tool: to her, it is more beneficial as a marketing tool rather than a direct sales tool. Its e-commerce values are coming via maintaining a meaningful relationship with the fans and referring them to the website, where the transactions occur.

Annie's plans for the future in terms of social media are to *'keep going as we have, regular updates each day and try to keep the page interesting and entertaining as well.'* This response tends to suggest the start of a future social media strategy for the hotel, which is currently lacking as argued before. However, it shows that there is some thinking with regard to future goals and Facebook is important in this.

4.3.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Annie maintains the hotel's Facebook page from her home office in Sydney; therefore, the issue of slow internet connection in regional areas is irrelevant in this case. This remote operation of the page is quite unique given it would be expected that most STEs would update it on site. Still, doing so from a distance may give Annie a broader view of the hotel

and its marketing needs, as well as a chance to look strategically at what the competitors are doing than if she were physically present at the hotel and naturally focused more on the day-to-day requirements.

Annie uses several tools to maintain the Facebook page: *'I have a little flip camera to take short videos and I upload them into YouTube, and then I (upload) my YouTube videos onto Facebook and Twitter and the website. Just plug it into the computer and upload it and I edit it with Microsoft Movie Maker, but nothing expensive.'* Annie also uses TweetDeck to maintain her Twitter page. This range of tools demonstrates Annie's good understanding of digital marketing and new media, as she utilises basic and accessible tools that can make her social media efforts fruitful (for instance, editing a video with Movie Maker to make it more attractive and, as a result, to generate a viral effect of sharing and commenting on Facebook and YouTube).

In terms of a special budget for her social media work, Annie admits that the amount is very limited: *'Now and again I might do an ad on Facebook ... pay $10 a day for 2 weeks. That's the most I'll spend on that.'* While it is clear that Annie's original goal in creating a Facebook page for the hotel was to reduce the advertising cost, it is surprising to learn of this sharp cut in marketing expenses. As a result, Annie may be missing out on opportunities by not investing in more third party applications or Facebook Ads. While these services do not come free of charge, they are able to enhance engagement for a small fee.

4.3.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Annie claims that she needs more training in video editing and publishing for the web to enhance her online activities: *'At the moment I'd like to learn more about the video on YouTube, creating the videos ... make the most of YouTube with your tagging.'* This is further evidence for Annie's good understanding of new media principles, as tagging on YouTube will make her videos more accessible and will increase their findability rates – which will drive more traffic to the hotel's website and to the Facebook page.

When it comes to the hotel's website, Annie expresses her disappointment with the content management system she is using: *'I don't really like the software my website is built on. I find it very difficult to use if you're building a page ... I find it very difficult to work with.'* Because of that, Annie admits that she is making only basic changes to the website, and asks the company who hosts the website to complete more complex tasks.

4.3.3.4 Business Benefits

The customer value that Annie sees in the hotel's Facebook page is in its potential to create a community or network of past and future guests: '... *they want to feel more like a community and connecting with the business*.' This is the essence of Facebook as a social network, which allows you to connect with the people who are important to you through public discussions and interactions (Montgomery & Chester 2009). Annie's references to current cultural events in Gympie demonstrate her commitment to the above.

Cutting down the advertising cost is Annie's relative advantage from operating the Facebook page: '*I was looking for other ways to advertise ... connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising.*' While social media marketing can be costly due to investments in ads and/or in applications, Annie perceives that Facebook offers an advantage to her.

Facebook is a simple tool for Annie to use. For instance, she indicates that she uses Facebook Ads sometimes, monitors the activity with Facebook's monthly analytics report and links YouTube videos to Facebook after editing and tagging them. The business benefit of operating a marketing platform easily allows her to have a good level of control over Facebook.

Annie is able to observe the performance of the page by tracking and monitoring the user comments, as well as by the data she receives from Facebook in their weekly report. This transparency that Facebook offers makes Annie feel that she is aware of the user behaviour and the effectiveness of the page. This benefit will assist her in increasing the value of Facebook.

4.3.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 2

Table 4.2 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.2: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 2

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Annie understands that social media can help her spend less on advertising, and uses it mainly for this reason 2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are important to Annie 3. Annie treats the Facebook page as a virtual community and not as a billboard, which is evident in the content she chooses to publish 4. She does not value Facebook as an experimental tool but rather equivalent to the hotel's website 5. Despite the above, Annie does not have a pre-planned social media strategy for the hotel 6. Facebook indirectly contributed to hotel bookings
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. Annie works from her Sydney home office, which may give her a broader perspective over the hotel's marketing needs 2. She uses some third party tools to increase engagement 3. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities, but sometimes spends a small amount of money on Facebook ads
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Difficulties with video editing 2. Difficulties with the content management system of the hotel's website
Business Benefits	1. Past and future guests can join an online community to revive holiday experiences or to learn about the hotel 2. Cutting down the advertising cost 3. Facebook is a simple tool for Annie to work with 4. Good tracking capabilities that enable Annie to learn about the e-satisfaction of her users

4.4 Accommodation Provider 3

4.4.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 3

This hotel is located in Hahndorf, a small town that is South Australia's oldest German settlement. This German influence, which is evident in Hahndorf's houses and bakeries, is the main attraction for visitors in the area (South Australia 2011). The hotel contains, apart from several types of accommodation, two bars and a gaming club with 33 machines.

The home page of the hotel's website features the main events taking place at the hotel in the coming month, which can demonstrate how central the events are for the business. The hotel promotes several unique accommodation packages: for weddings, functions and conferences. The website mentions several times that the hotel was restored, but it does not state when the restoration occurred.

4.4.2 The Hotel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 3

The page has 315 fans at the time of interview. It uses Facebook's default applications: Wall, Info, Friend Activity, Photos, Discussions, Reviews and Events. The page also displays mobile check-ins to the hotel that stand at 180 as of that date. The page does not have a unique uniform resource locator (URL). This is a short URL using the hostel's name instead of a long string of letters and numbers, which could have been modified by the page's administrator via the 'Edit Page' option. This unique URL makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page.

The Info page has most of its sections updated, but lacks the 'About' field. Filling this section could have helped users understand what the hotel's offerings are in addition to the usual rooms (that is the bar, the function hall, and so on). On the other hand, omitting the 'About' makes the page look and feel more like a closed community of past guests who already know what the hotel has to offer. An issue that was identified during the page review was the open editing option: anyone can edit the 'Info' page, most likely due to a misunderstanding the page owner had with the settings.

The Photos page contains some 21 images. This limited number of photos may affect the users' information gathering process, as it presents only a partial view of the hotel. For instance, there are no room photos. This finding correlates with the limited number of photos that were found on the hotel's official website.

The page is updated randomly. There can be weeks with not a single update, and weeks with frequent updates day after day. The main topics are events (music shows or live coverage of sports matches) and alcohol special prices. User activity is limited, with only two posts in the three months prior to the page testing. This figure is surprisingly low, considering the relatively large number of fans that the page has and raises questions regarding the strategy and content effectiveness, questions that will be examined in the last data collection.

Although the 'Events' tab is displayed on the page, it is empty of content. Inviting users to click on a navigation tab just to find that it has no content may lead to disappointment and to a bad user experience. In addition, the hotel misses an opportunity to promote what seems to be an important element of its business model.

4.4.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 3

The following section summarises the interview with Kristy (pseudonym), who is the Administrative Manager of the hotel and also responsible for its social media presence. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.4.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

The essence of social media and Facebook in particular as a platform to reach more and more people quickly is clear to Kristy, who claims that she uses it *'because it gets out there. It gets out to all the people that we want to attract.'* The viral nature of Facebook is evident in her social media strategy, and the main goal is to spread the news about the hotel's events to wider groups of customers: *'We can cover more different groups of people ... when I put something up about a show they send it up to all their friends as well ...'*

Kristy relies on the notifications that she receives to her email as the only tracking and monitoring method: *'I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners.'* Ignoring other methods such as Facebook Insights, which is already built in the page and can reveal meaningful data about user behaviour may limit Kristy's understanding of the page's performance.

The content on the page is, as Kristy mentioned, *'mainly about the shows and any pictures that we have taken around the venue in the events that we've been having.'* As functions and other kinds of events are one of the hotel's main sources of income, focusing only on this

element as part of the content seems useful. This way, potential clients will know what to expect when visiting the page and will strengthen their loyalty to the page as it provides them with the content that interests them. At the same time, experimenting with other types of content and other topics may lead to surprising findings, such as new products that the hotel can develop, in accordance with the users' reactions. For example, highlighting the natural characteristics of Hahndorf may attract new kinds of guests to the hotel – those who are interested in exploring this part of South Australia.

4.4.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Kristy works on the hotel's Facebook page *'an hour a fortnight at the most.'* This time frame is very limited when trying to grow a community of followers and to engage with them, considering the fast nature of social media. Investing more time on the page would have allowed Kristy to create meaningful content, to respond faster to users' comments and to check what her competitors are doing on their Facebook pages.

Kristy is satisfied with the internet speed in Hahndorf, despite its semi-rural location in South Australia. She does not use any programs or third party tools to enhance the user experience of the page, and does not have a special social media budget. By ignoring third party tools and by not allocating some funds for social media, Kristy potentially misses an opportunity to improve the hotel's Facebook presence.

4.4.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

When asked about digital skills she would have liked to improve, Kristy's response was: *'Because I'm not the one who's in charge of that sort of thing, and the only thing that I ever do is on Facebook ... I really don't think that I need to do anything. Cause it's not part of what I do.'* This answer reveals that Kristy does not view Facebook as a single element in the wider spectrum of digital marketing, but rather as an independent phenomenon. Kristy's answers throughout the interview revealed a limited familiarity with and exposure to digital tools and principles, which could have assisted her with managing the hotel's page on Facebook.

4.4.3.4 Business Benefits

The relative advantage that Kristy sees in Facebook is its ability to assist her with reaching larger audiences for promotional activities *('Because it gets out there. It gets out to all the*

people that we want to attract.'). In addition, Facebook helps her with better segmentation of the hotel's target audience (*'We can cover more different groups of people.'*). The focus here is then on the numeric potential that Facebook as a recent innovation can offer its adopters, as well as on sending the right message to the right audience due to the ability to recognise the special preferences of each audience.

Kristy did not mention any problems that she might have experienced with Facebook, which demonstrates its simplicity in her view. This is a benefit as it allows her to maintain the Facebook page efficiently and independently. However, Kristy's answers revealed a very limited usage of Facebook's functions and tools, which might have changed her opinion on this matter.

Kristy feels that she is able to observe the results and general performance of the Facebook page via the email notifications that she receives from Facebook (*'I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners.'*). This feeling will assist Kristy in increasing the adoption rates of Facebook as a new innovation, and especially if she starts using more tracking tools such as Facebook Insights. Understanding how the page performs will allow Kristy to maximise its online potential by reaching new audiences and satisfying the current ones.

4.4.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 3

Table 4.3 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.3: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 3

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Kristy values the viral potential that Facebook has to offer, and uses it to reach the hotel's target audience 2. Tracking is done through email notifications only 3. The content is almost exclusively about events and shows at the hotel
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. Kristy invests a very limited time maintaining the Facebook page

	2. There is no dedicated social media budget
	3. She does not use any third party tools to enhance user experience
ICT Skills and Knowledge	Kristy does not believe that she should be familiar with any ICT-related techniques, as her responsibility with Facebook is a different matter. She does not see Facebook as an ICT product
Business Benefits	1. Communicating with a larger audience
	2. Expanding the target audience with better segmentation
	3. Facebook is a simple tool for Kristy to work with
	4. Good tracking capabilities that enable Kristy to learn about the performance of the page and, therefore, to improve it

4.5 Accommodation Provider 4

4.5.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 4

This Youth Hostel Association (YHA) hostel is located in a rural township that is adjacent to a national park, one of Victoria's main tourist attractions. The hostel, which includes four different room types, is powered by solar electricity and applies eco-friendly initiatives including solar hot water and rain-water collection. Due to its affiliation with YHA, it is obliged to follow the organisation's general marketing plan, and to ask for permission before implementing any marketing initiative – whether it is online or offline.

As the accommodation provider's web presence operates through the website of the YHA, it uses a single design template that allows for consistency for all the YHA hostels. Some assumptions can be drawn from the hostel's website content with regard to the target audience, as it mentions backpackers more than once. In addition, the image choice also suggests that young backpackers are the main desired clientele of the hostel, as they are the only people who appear in the photographs. Finally, it seems the website is well connected to other online channels such as Facebook via the 'Like' button, as well as to YouTube via a link to a video about the destination.

The team that runs the hostel is comprised of two people, a husband and wife, who arrived there only a few months earlier following a similar experience in another tourism business.

4.5.2 The Hostel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 4

The page has forty-nine Likes (that is followers) at the time of interview. The page also displays mobile check-ins to the hostel, which stand at eight as of that date. The application bar includes four applications, all produced by Facebook: Wall, Info, Friend Activity and Photos. The Info page has all its sections updated and detailed. The Description part displays text that was copied from the website and was not written especially for Facebook. This suggests that the page administrator (one of the owners, Jane) believes that content from the official website can be effective in the framework of the social network as well. Another explanation may be YHA's publishing rules. The page does not have a unique uniform resource locator (URL). This is a short URL using the hostel's name instead of a long string of letters and numbers, which could have been modified by Jane via the 'Edit Page' option. This unique URL makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page.

The Photos page contains ninety-four images in six albums with different themes, from social life at the hostel to the local scenery. The page has been updated at least once a week, mainly with photos and status updates about the wildlife around the hostel. The user activity is minimal, with only several comments during a full month period of Facebook activity. No user has posted an update during July 2011, except for a Melbourne business that belongs to the same hostel chain.

4.5.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 4

The following section summarises the interview with Jane (pseudonym), one of the hostel's owners. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.5.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Jane claims that she can see the short- and long-term benefits that Facebook can bring to her business, which is why she decided to use it. Jane indicates that '… *I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straight away what value it could have on the business ...*' She puts a lot of effort into monitoring and tracking the page, making sure that she is aware of new comments from fans the minute they are published via her mobile phone

and making sure to moderate them to avoid damaging the brand values of the hostel *('That's not the image we want to portray so I would straight away jump on and delete it.').* This behaviour indicates that Jane has a clear brand image for the hostel, whether created by her or by the organisation it belongs to, and that the page aims to display a consistent look and feel that matches this brand image. However, negative comment deletion may lead to a bigger backlash (Fauscette 2010). The author suggests that problematic comments should be approached with humour, which is something that did not come up in the interview with Jane.

She uses Facebook Insights to track user behaviour, as well as gets a weekly report from Facebook, which helps her prepare a tracking report for the organisation to which the hostel belongs: '*... they want us to have a Facebook page, but there are a lot of conditions on what we are allowed to do and what we must do. What they don't want is for a whole lot of hostels to start a page 3 months ago, and then it becomes outdated and irrelevant. So sending a report to them shows them that we've had recent activity. That makes them happy.'* Having such an organised reporting system assists Jane with better understanding the page and its visitors, their preferences and motivations, which will assist her in building a business strategy that will serve both the hostel and its target audience, and will match the overall strategy of YHA. In addition, the compliance to YHA's regulations increases the chances of the page to stay updated and relevant for its users, as Jane has to be committed to its constant maintenance.

When it comes to content, Jane admits that she does not have a clear content plan or style. When asked about the eco-friendliness of the hostel and whether it is something that she highlights as part of the content on the Facebook page, she said that she has not thought of it. Jane uses an approach that is generalist rather than specific, allowing her to focus on the many important social interactions that visitors might enjoy when visiting. She indicates that: '*... Probably focused more on the social aspect of the hostel life, and the wildlife. Because it's new to me I'm running this page as if it's an extension of my life. It's like "Oh my gosh, there is a kangaroo in the backyard ..." that's probably the main focus of my page.'* This social aspect reflects a personal interaction that Jane has with prospective guests. However, with the lack of a defined tone and a clear content selection, as suggested by Green (2009), the page might be irrelevant for its target audience. By managing the page as an extension of her life, Jane breaks the boundary between the self and the business. This may work well for her, if the emphasis of the page is on the personal service and the cosiness that the hostel offers its

guests. Still, this online behaviour has to evolve from a solid decision rather than from experimentation.

Jane is also trying to satisfy the expectations of international travellers that might visit the Facebook page with viewpoints and information that these travellers might find interesting about Australia, as she learnt from a conference for tourism professionals: '*There is an image in America that in Australia you see kangaroos walking down the street, well here we actually have kangaroos walking down the street ... it's kind of like feeding that expectation with the reality ...*' It is not clear from the latter if the page is aimed at foreign visitors, or that she did not fully consider the local audience when it comes to the content. This way or the other, it seems that Jane is experimenting with the content she publishes on the page rather than having an organised plan.

She considered using other social networks in the past such as MySpace and Twitter, but decided to focus only on Facebook at this stage: '*Personally, I tried MySpace a few years ago, and I didn't like it at all. Not interested in Twitter because I don't really understand it.*' This mature approach emphasises Jane's desire to understand the medium and its business value before using it, rather than to follow online trends automatically.

Overall, it seems that Jane is aware of the technological capabilities that the business has, including the limitations associated with YHA. She also understands her responsibility as the administrator of the Facebook page, which is clear from her responses about the moderation of comments. This awareness is an integral part of any social media strategy (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010). However, Jane does not seem to have a clear understanding regarding the content plan and style of the page, and uses it as an extension of her personal life. This implies that Jane is not fully aware of the target audience that visits the page (or may visit it in the future), their preferences and motivations, which affects the overall strategy. The lack of the content component in Jane's social media strategy may also damage the performance of the Facebook page on search engines, and may also expedite the creation of a community page for the hostel (perhaps by previous guests), which will compete with Jane's page on Facebook's search results (Mayfield 2011).

4.5.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Jane is satisfied with the speed of internet where the hostel is located – in a rural area of Victoria. She does not use third party tools or software to assist her with maintaining the

Facebook page, and does not have a special budget for social media marketing. Jane highlights the issue of Facebook in that it is free and requires no setup or ongoing maintenance cost: *'That's the beauty of it, it's free.'* Jane is missing out on opportunities by not knowing what is available from Facebook Ads to third party applications. While these services do not come free of charge, they are able to enhance engagement for a small fee.

Jane does not use Facebook Ads to promote the page and the hostel due to limitations from the organisation she works for. Those pay-per-click ads can generate more traffic to the page and increase its engagement levels. Jane indicates that: *'... we're not allowed to do that ... we have to get permission. We can't actually authorise spending of any money'.* This authorisation system might have consequences for the development of the page and its growth as it creates a bureaucratic approach to social media. Notably, social media is based on openness (Anderson 2007). The system, as Jane describes it, is currently so bureaucratic that she had to apply for permission to link from the official website of the hostel to its Facebook page. Maintaining and developing a social media presence with a limited degree of flexibility and freedom may pose problems to the growth of the page and its success.

4.5.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Jane claims that she is *'fairly confident on Facebook'* and would like to learn more about digital marketing, especially topics she is unfamiliar with. However, her previous answers revealed only a limited interaction with Facebook's capabilities for page administrators. She does not use Facebook Ads and does not experiment with third party applications. It seems that she manages the page as if she was a regular Facebook user and her statement about the page as an extension of her life only emphasises that.

When it comes to the official website, Jane admits that it is maintained and updated by the organisation itself. It is also worth discussing whether the remote operation of the website affects the performance of the Facebook page and vice versa, as social media is based on immediacy (Treadaway & Smith 2010). If the Facebook page is an extension of the website, the two should be maintained by the same person, or at least by people who work together on a daily basis and so are constantly aware of changes to business requirements (for instance, updates, product promotions and news).

4.5.3.4 Business Benefits

Jane divides the target audience of the Facebook page into past guests and potential guests. Jane indicates that the customer value for those who have already visited the hostel is that they are able to have extended experiences with the Facebook platform, allowing them to revive positive memories from their visit. Jane notes that previous visitors can *'... just be able to stay in touch with the place that they clearly loved ... and know what's going on there and feel like they are kind of a part of it still.'* The value for future customers lies in the information the Facebook page supplies, which helps them to make a decision before booking a room, with Jane noting that *'... I get comments from people that haven't had the chance to come here yet, saying "it looks great I want to go there", we get that a lot ...'* While it is useful to focus on these two groups (that is past and future guests), it is also important not to forget guests who are currently staying at the hostel and may use the page to learn about current events, information gathering and commenting. However, the first two groups of customers are significantly bigger than the latter. In both cases, the benefit is to create a supportive customer attitude that may lead to future purchases and to positive word of mouth.

The relative advantage that Jane finds in Facebook is that it provides a more personalised presence to the hostel, rather than the one that is provided by the organisation it belongs to. Jane identifies that *'... Facebook allows us to actually choose what image that we want to project ... the marketing machine of YHA only has a set image that they sell. Each hostel has a life and a DNA of its own, and it's impossible to convey that through the dollar value advertising, whereas Facebook ... if you look at our page you will actually see that this is our big house, and we have dinner parties ... and that's something we can't convey on a flyer.'* Therefore, Facebook improves the traditional marketing capabilities of the organisation as an important aspect of relative advantage to other accommodation providers in the area that the business operates and also the ones offered under the banner of the YHA organisation.

Facebook as a social network is familiar to Jane from her personal use of the system: *'I'm a Facebook addict ... I have a personal page of my own that I use to keep in contact because I'm not from Victoria ... I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straight away what value it could have on the business.'* She feels that people who are not familiar with Facebook will find it difficult to maintain a business page: *'This is what came up at our national conference; there was a great debate and people not wanting to do this ...*

there's a lot of people resisting it because they are not Facebookers. I think it would be very hard to someone who doesn't think Facebook to run a page.'

Jane claims that she trusts her web skills when it comes to maintaining the page on Facebook (*'I am fairly confident on Facebook'*), which makes the innovation simple in her opinion and, therefore, easy to use. Her answers did not expose any problems she had with the system and its complexity. The business benefit in this case is Jane is able to maintain the page herself without paying for a third party provider to do it for her.

Jane's answers demonstrate her strong awareness of user behaviour on the page and the high visibility of the results from the performance of the page. She monitors the page regularly (*'It's always open. I also receive notifications on my phone ... so the minute someone comments we know, wherever we are. We are constantly monitoring it ...'),* and also gains insights from user comments about the page (*'I get comments from people that haven't had the chance to come here yet, saying "It looks great I want to go there." We get that a lot.').* Knowing the target audience and being able to tailor a social media strategy from this knowledge is the business benefit in this case.

4.5.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 4

Table 4.4 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.4: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 4

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Short- and long-term benefits are clear to Jane, as she is already familiar with Facebook and with the values it brings to both the business and the customers 2. Moderation based on a clear brand image is taking place, since it is important to Jane to make sure that the content matches the brand's image 3. The page is monitored and tracked for improved results, following YHA's request for a monthly report 4. No clear content plan is evident. Jane did not think of

	this aspect thoroughly, and follows her instincts as if the business page was an extension of her personal page on Facebook 5. A set of other social networks was examined and a decision to focus on Facebook was made. Jane prefers to use a social network she understands, and believes in its value
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. Jane reports on a satisfying internet connection in the hostel's area, despite its relative remoteness 2. No third party tools are used to maintain the page, as Jane is not aware of them 3. No special budget for social media activities was allocated. YHA controls the budget and an approval is needed for any social media expenditure 4. There is a limited freedom in operating the page due to strong and close involvement of YHA
ICT Knowledge and Skills	1. Jane feels knowledgeable enough when it comes to Facebook marketing 2. Jane has nothing to do with the maintenance of the official website, which is done from a remote office
Business Benefits	1. Past guests feel close to the hostel and revive their holiday memories 2. Potential guests receive valuable information 3. A personalised presence to the hostel: YHA's brand image is homogenous 4. No learning is required: The system is familiar to Jane (personal experience) 5. Facebook is easy to use (personal experience) 6. Effective observation of Jane's audience on Facebook: Tracking and monitoring are important for Jane and for YHA

4.6 Accommodation Provider 5

4.6.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 5

The motel is located in the town of Merimbula on the Sapphire Coast of New South Wales, which is described on its official website as a popular tourist destination for a diverse range of people. There are several room types on offer, from family rooms to suites with private balconies, to cater to the needs of different audiences. The motel employs one full-time worker (Michelle, the receptionist and social media administrator) and five casual employees.

The home page of the motel's website features a special offer and gift vouchers. The prominence of these two content items reflects that rooms are the main (if not only) product of this motel, and that room bookings are its main business goal.

Two prominent social media icons are displayed on the home page, one for Facebook and one for Twitter (although both are linked to the motel's Facebook page). There is an area for newsletter sign ups, which together with the social media icons demonstrate the motel's commitment to staying in touch with its past and future customers.

4.6.2 The Motel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 5

The page is being followed by 366 users at the time of interview. The page also displays mobile check-ins to the motel, which stand at fifty-two as of that date. There are five applications in the application bar: three are made by Facebook (Wall, Info and Friend Activity), and two were created by third party providers (Email Signup, Competition). The goal of these two external applications is to encourage more Facebook fans to sign up for the motel's newsletter and at the same time to drive more 'Likes' to the page by offering a prize. Creating the applications demonstrates a good familiarity with the principles of engagement on Facebook, and may lead to a positive user experience. At the same time, it is not clear why an important and popular application such as Photos (Hickey 2007) is missing especially considering the fact it is a default application.

The Info tab contains limited information about the motel and the services it offers. The 'About' field, for example, contains the following sentence: 'Phone 1800 XXX to enjoy the luxury and space of XXX on your next stay in Merimbula.' This sentence does not tell the user much about the motel, the rooms, the facilities or the surroundings. Content that is not meaningful to the end user may damage user satisfaction (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010).

The page does not have a unique uniform resource locator (URL). This is a short URL using the motel's name instead of a long string of letters and numbers, which could have been modified by Michelle via the 'Edit Page' option. This unique URL makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page (Reed 2011).

The content published on the page is diverse, and includes weather updates, links to articles about Merimbula, updates about whale watching (one of the main attractions in the area), and photos of the beach and the surrounding areas. This diversity appears to be welcomed by the fans, in that they make frequent comments on the motel's posts, ask questions and share their thoughts. For instance, the following user comment was written in response to a post about the current competition the motel is running on Facebook: *'One of the best holidays we've had with our friends from Western Australia (WA) for a long time and that's thanks to your great and friendly staff.'* It is interesting to see that the comment has no direct connection to the original post; instead, it shows a positive and excited user feedback to original participation ideas that the motel has developed (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010). The fact that the page is being updated at least once a week has also contributed to the relatively high user feedback.

4.6.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 5

The following section summarises the interview with Michelle (pseudonym), the motel's receptionist and social media administrator.

4.6.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Michelle appreciates the popularity of social media in the current business world, which is the main reason why the motel is using it: *'We realised that it's just growing and growing so much, and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it.'* She sees Facebook as an advertising platform, and at the same time understands that it cannot be treated as any other advertising tool: *'I guess that although we're not supposed to ... (it's) a form of advertising in a way. For our loyal guests and other people who do like us – we can keep them updated by offering them special packages. We can also keep them up to date with what's going on in town, local area ...'* Michelle's main marketing approach is to use Facebook to communicate the local life to the fans of the page.

Michelle claims that she monitors the page frequently by visiting it and examining any newly posted comments or exchanges. When asked if she uses Facebook Insights, she indicates that

'Yeah, we look at that from time to time.' From this answer it is not clear whether she actually uses Facebook Insights or not, as it is a comprehensive tool that deserves more than just a short statement. In addition, Michelle did not expand on the issue of tracking and interpreting statistics of page usage.

The content strategy on the other hand is very clear to Michelle, as seen on the page. When asked about the types of content she posts on Facebook, she replied: *'We're trying to do different things, like I said what's sort of going on in the area, we've got a competition at the moment that we've got up there, the next races that are coming up, photos, you know ... a lovely day outside.'* Both Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) encourage Facebook users to post meaningful content in order to create a viral effect of sharing and responding. Michelle's answer shows that this is what she is aiming for, by covering topics that may be of interest to the motel's past and future guests. At the same time, she does not seem to fully understand how to determine whether the users are happy with this content or not: *'I suppose because they liked us in the first place, and they want to know what's going on and what we're up to.'* This answer correlates with the limited tracking and monitoring issue that was discussed above.

Michelle is using Twitter as well to promote the motel, but claims that she does not feel it is as successful as Facebook: *'... it's definitely not as big. We're actually linked, for everything that we post on Facebook will automatically goes on to that Twitter account as well.'* This last comment may explain why Michelle is not satisfied with Twitter's performance: she is operating it automatically via direct updates from Facebook. In other words, she does not create unique content for Twitter, which is different in its characteristics than Facebook, but rather recycles Facebook posts by publishing them on Twitter. This behaviour may damage the user feedback (Sherman 2010).

4.6.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Michelle dedicates one hour each day to maintain the motel's Facebook page (*'Definitely no more than an hour a day. I suppose, yeah, just checking it regularly and adding a post here and there, but wouldn't be more than an hour.'*). Checking the page on a daily basis is an important element in the process of enhancing user feedback, as it shows users that there is someone who listens to them and their online needs. At the same time, it allows the page owner to take control over the page and its dynamics, rather than to use automated posts (Sherman 2010).

Michelle claims that she does not use any programs or tools in her social media work. However, in the Facebook page examination that was done before the interview, the researcher identified two applications (or tabs) that were created by third party providers (see above). Michelle probably does not consider these providers as special programs or tools, hence the confusion.

The motel does not have a dedicated budget for social media. Michelle claims that there was a single experiment with Facebook Ads, but nothing other than that *('... We did try advertising, we did one little go with that, spent $20 or something, but that didn't really ... (work out well). We've been thinking about doing it again but at the time it didn't really pay off.').*

4.6.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Michelle feels that her video and editing skills are not developed enough, and would like to get training in those two areas. She has never uploaded original videos to the motel's Facebook page. When it comes to Facebook, the toughest parts for her are deciding what to post and attracting more fans *('What to actually post. We're aiming to get to 500 Likes but it's proving to be a bit more difficult than we thought it might. A bit slow.').* The motel's website is administered by an external person, with only the simple tasks done in house *('We have a local guy that designed the website for us ... if we need to do basic things I know how to do that sort of stuff, but bigger things like adding pages I'm slowly starting to learn but he does most of that for us.').*

4.6.3.4 Business Benefits

The customer value that Michelle sees in the motel's Facebook page is in the updated information it provides, which eliminates the need to look for it elsewhere *('I guess that they can get the automatic update notes ... it's in their face. They don't have a choice ... you know, they don't have to go searching for information. For example, the local gig guide, we put that on, and different concerts and gigs will come up, so it's all there for them to see without having to look for it.').* This may lead to the creation of a supportive customer attitude, which may generate future purchases and a positive word of mouth (Montgomery & Chester 2009).

Michelle believes that Facebook can improve the motel's advertising efforts by using its platform as *'a form of advertising in a way. Our loyal guests and people who do like us we*

can keep them updated.' In addition, she sees it as a new and improved way to keep the motel's customers informed with local news and events.

Facebook as a new innovation fits with what Michelle already knows about social media marketing. She is familiar with the global success of this new media, which may increase its adoption rates *('We realised that it's just growing and growing so much and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it.').*

Michelle did not mention any difficulties with maintaining the motel's Facebook page, and therefore it can be said that the system is not complex for her to use. The only thing that she mentioned as a difficulty was writing the content for the page, which cannot be associated exclusively with Facebook but rather as a general creativity skill.

Michelle mentioned an experiment she had with Facebook Ads, which proved to be a negative one *('We did try advertising, we did one little go with that, spent $20 or something, but that didn't really ... it didn't really pay off.').* This incident is a proof for trialability as a business benefit, as it made Michelle feel that Facebook can be experimented and modified by her as an early adopter.

Michelle claims that she can track the dynamics of the page by visiting it on a daily basis, which is a business benefit as it allows her to observe the performance of the page and to learn how to improve it and maximise its online potential.

4.6.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 5

Table 4.5 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.5: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 5

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Michelle understands that social media can help her spend less on advertising, especially due to its success worldwide 2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily but only by visiting the

	page
	3. Michelle has a clear content strategy that contains a diverse range of content in different formats
	4. Twitter is used as a duplication of the Facebook page
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. The Facebook page is maintained daily
	2. Third party tools were used to build two applications
	3. The motel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Difficulties with video editing, image editing and writing
	2. Difficulties with more advanced tasks on the official website of the motel
Business Benefits	1. Facebook is an improved advertising platform
	2. Facebook is a simple tool for Michelle to work with
	3. Michelle understands the global phenomenon that is social media, and therefore Facebook's adoption rates will grow
	4. The system allows Michelle to experiment with different tactics and campaigns
	5. Michelle feels that she can learn about the page dynamics by visiting it daily

4.7 Accommodation Provider 6

4.7.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 6

The backpacker hostel is located in Albany, Western Australia's sixth largest city that promotes its convict history as the main tourist attraction (Tourism Western Australia 2011). The city has preserved old taverns and other colonial buildings, which are now housing museums and restaurants. The hostel employs two full-time employees (Joe, the owner and social media administrator) and his wife. There are also 7–9 casual volunteers from Helpx.net, which is a website that coordinates free volunteer work exchange in Australia.

The home page of the hostel's website lists the facilities that it offers to guests, from cable TV channels to free internet usage. It also highlights several characteristics of the business such as the fact it is never crowded. The 'About Us' section contains information about the history of the property, which used to be one of the oldest hostels in Western Australia. The owner bought the property in 2009 and renovated it extensively.

4.7.2 The Hostel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 6

The page is being followed by 450 users at the time of interview. The page also displays mobile check-ins to the hostel that stand at 114 as of that date. There are ten applications in the application bar, nine are made by Facebook and one created by Bookings.com. The goal of that application is to generate online bookings via the Facebook page. Creating it demonstrates a good familiarity with the user engagement on Facebook, and may lead to a positive user experience and to increased revenues.

The Info tab is rich with information about the hostel and its facilities, shaped in a bullet-list form. It is relatively detailed, more so than might be expected when examining accommodation providers' pages. Despite that, the About field only reads 'Are you in the mood?' While this sentence is unclear and does not seem to say much about the hostel, it has the potential for branding to create an identity to the hostel (The owner will expand on this in the next section of this case study.).

The Photos tab contains 583 photos uploaded by the page administrator and which are organised in six different albums. While the photos are diverse in their subject matter, from room shots to entertainment and hostel events, the album names are mostly general and do not clearly describe what sort of photos they contain.

The Events tab features six past events (that is, events that already took place), which demonstrate a potentially good use of that feature to create engagement with the fans. The same applies to the Videos tab with ten original videos that were created by the hostel and portray its day-to-day life and activities. The videos are not edited and potentially could be improved.

The page has a unique uniform resource locator (URL). As explained before, this is a short URL using the hostel's name instead of a long string of letters and numbers, which have been modified by Joe via the 'Edit Page' option. This unique URL makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page (Reed 2011).

The content published on the page is diverse, and includes updates about current events and celebrations at the hostel, 'thank you' notes to fans for supporting the hostel, videos and photos. The general tone and style of writing is humorous and friendly, as expected from a business that caters mainly to young backpackers. One status update has asked the fans to choose between two designs of a promotional sign to the hostel; this is a good use of Facebook not only to create engagement but also to use the feedback of the users in order to develop a product.

The page is updated almost on a daily basis. On some days the page administrator has even posted several updates. The user participation is relatively high with five user-initiated posts, twenty-two comments and many 'Likes' during the month of December 2011.

4.7.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 6

The following section summarises the interview with Joe (pseudonym), the hostel's owner and social media administrator. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.7.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Joe mentions ease of communications between travellers as the main reason behind creating the Facebook page for the hostel: *'It's a massive medium that young people use when travelling around the world. Most travellers are keeping in touch with each other using Facebook. In the past you just took people's addresses and hoped they would write. Now we have this incredible network of people, who can meet, make friends quickly and get in contact if they like. So, the main objective was to get people to keep mixing together, connect with each other, and to let people know whenever they are moving around what's happening in the backpackers'.* This answer reveals Joe's familiarity with the special needs of the hostel's main target audience. In addition to the above he tries to use Facebook for business exposure purposes, which may lead to visits of past and future guests: *'We bought a very horrible place and turned it into something really nice. I want all the people who stayed here in the past to see the changes.'*

Tracking of the page is done via the monthly email from Facebook: *'There's a little tracking thing, I can't describe it … you can see how many people visited the page. You get an email sent every month showing you how many people have visited your page.'* When asked about Facebook Insights as a tracking tool, Joe confused it with the email *('Insights? Oh, maybe I*

do, I get an email once in every two months from Facebook, so maybe it is that but I didn't recognise the name.'). These answers demonstrate that tracking is done sporadically, which might affect Joe's understanding of the performance of the page, as well as user behaviour.

When asked about the types of content that he publishes on the page, Joe chose to focus on the photos: *'We're trying to put nice photos in there. If you want to market the place you have got to make it memorable. So, we've got ideas on how to make it really memorable when we take photos and make videos.'* The 'About' field, as stated earlier, reads 'Are you in the mood?' Joe explains the story behind it: *'Albany has a marketing campaign saying "Amazing Albany", which we found to be extremely overused and dull. There's a lady in Albany who has a property and she put on her page "Are you in the mood?" and we thought that it's really good (and used it too). Since then, some younger travellers from overseas didn't really get it, so we're not really sure whether it works or not.'* It can be seen from this short but insightful example that Joe is well aware with the marketing messages of the region as a whole, as well as with marketing initiatives of similar properties in Albany. In addition, it shows that he feels comfortable with experimenting on Facebook without knowing whether it is effective or not.

Joe claims that the Facebook page has driven bookings to the hostel: *'We've only got about 420 followers, but actually yes I do (feel that the page led to bookings). Since I linked it to the webpage and because I optimised the webpage with a company in Perth, we are getting a lot more bookings from the webpage.'* His plans for 2012 in terms of social media are to learn more about Facebook as a platform for businesses: *'I'm interested to know what they are going to do to change it (the platform). I know they are going to change it. They almost have the potential to replace web pages.'* Joe recognises the growing business trend of using the Facebook page as a substitute for a website, which demonstrates his understanding of the prominence that social media has in the business world.

4.7.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Joe dedicates one-and-a-half hours each day to maintain the hostel's Facebook page. Checking the page on a daily basis is important to the process of encouraging user feedback, as it tells users that you as the page administrator are there for them. At the same time, it allows the page administrator to take control over the page and its dynamics, rather than to use automated posts (Sherman 2010).

The speed of internet in Albany is not ideal according to Joe *('Yeah, it's ok ... it probably can be a lot faster.')*. A slower internet connection may have an impact on the types of content that will be published on the page (for instance, large photos or videos can take longer to upload than text updates). However, Joe does not seem to be bothered by the infrastructure when it comes to maintaining the page.

Joe claims that he does not use any programs or tools in his social media work other than the default image editing tool on his Macintosh computer. He also states that third party applications are something that he would love to use in the future: *'I probably should (use them), I haven't had the time to check it; I was looking at somebody's page the other day and they had links for novices and questionnaires, it was very interactive. I have seen the page where you can go and create it, but I don't know how to use it.'* Several weeks after the interview was conducted, a booking widget was added to the page as a third party tab. On a second phone call, Joe explained the change: *'Booking.com is a company we get a lot of bookings from, so it seemed sensible to add it to the Facebook page. I am not sure what effect this will have because I don't think I can monitor its effect, but it will certainly be a positive addition.'*

The hostel does not have a dedicated budget for social media. Joe claims that he uses 'everything that comes free', and that he experimented once with Facebook Ads: *'I did one of their advertising campaigns for about 7 days, I wanted to lift the number of fans, I think I spent 2–3 dollars a day and got 50–60 extra people. So, for me I wasn't sure if it was worth it, but I'll do it again I think because ... if you have a product, you can isolate the target market almost to the niche level, and I think it's really clever.'* It is evident that Joe understands the targeting capabilities of Facebook ads and has a positive attitude towards using them again for business purposes.

4.7.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Joe claims that Facebook is easy for him to use, and that he cannot think of any ICT-related area that he would like to learn about *('Nothing that I can think of ... I find it very user friendly.')*. The only area that Joe mentions as a weakness is utilising Facebook for e-commerce activities: *'I don't know about the lucrative side of Facebook. I don't know how to make money from it. There are programs out there marketing that, but I don't trust them enough to buy them.'* It is clear that Joe sees Facebook's potential in creating profits for his business, and that a proper guidance is what is stopping him from utilising this potential.

Joe maintains the hostel's website himself *('It was developed for us and I maintain it. I am just finding it difficult at the moment to change the slideshow; there's a code that I am missing but other than that it's all good.')*. Dealing with website maintenance requires more than just basic web knowledge, which may explain why Joe feels that Facebook is user friendly to him (no coding is required when operating the basic commands).

4.7.3.4 Business Benefits

Global visibility is the main business benefit that Joe is getting from Facebook: *'Say Sven from Sweden is here, and he sends his photo to his parents, who send it to their friends in the Baltics, and they send it to their friends in Greenland, and suddenly you get this network of people who see what your hostel is like. It really is a marketing tool as well.'* Joe feels that he does not do enough to enhance the visibility and exposure of the page: *'I'm not using it nearly to its potential. There should be a lot more videos on there, more interactions going on, there's a lot more I could be doing.'* Once again, these responses demonstrate Joe's understanding of how powerful Facebook is in people's life, as well as its varied marketing capabilities.

The extra customer value is in offering backpackers an online space to communicate with other backpackers that they met in the hostel. Joe claims that ease of communication is something that many young travellers appreciate when travelling, and is aware that Facebook is highly popular among this group: *'It's a massive medium that young people are travelling around the world with, and most travellers are keeping in touch with each other around the world.'* This ease of communication will assist Joe in designing customer attitudes. Montgomery and Chester (2009) demonstrate how top brands use social media marketing in order to create a discussion regarding their products, which can occur in Joe's page as well due to the above.

Another benefit for the business comes from the fact that Facebook is easy to use as a marketing platform. Joe is confident maintaining the page, and does not require any technical guidance.

The experimental nature of Facebook was demonstrated in Joe's answer about Facebook Ads. As explained earlier, he created a single campaign for a low investment and was not sure if it was successful or not in terms of his objectives. However, he is willing to try it again in the

future. This experimental freedom is a business benefit, as it allows Joe to search for the successful communication techniques with his fans without taking major risks.

And, finally, Joe's example of using a colleague's idea for the 'About' section demonstrates the business benefit of Facebook as a tool that promotes knowledge transfer within the business, as suggested by Langheinrich and Karjoth (2010). In this case, Facebook has helped to exchange marketing ideas between two accommodation providers in Albany that share the goal of increased bookings, and therefore can be considered a business benefit.

4.7.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 6

Table 4.6 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.6: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 6

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Ease of communication between guests was the main reason for Joe to create the page 2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily but only by visiting the page and checking the monthly email from Facebook 3. Joe is aware of the need to post original content and apply it to the photos and videos that he uploads to the page 4. Joe feels that Facebook has helped in generating bookings to the hostel 5. Plans for 2012 are to keep learning how Facebook will change and grow
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. The Facebook page is maintained daily 2. A third party application was added to the page

	3. The hostel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities
	4. Internet speed is slow, but still allows content upload
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Facebook is easy to use
	2. More training is required in utilising Facebook as an e-commerce tool
	3. Joe is maintaining the hostel's website and is familiar with html coding
Business Benefits	1. Visibility and global exposure
	2. Ease of use: Facebook is a simple tool for Joe to work with
	3. Experimental: An experiment with Facebook Ads was done; more may come in the future
	4. Extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with each other easily
	5. Knowledge transfer within the business/industry

4.8 Accommodation Provider 7

4.8.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 7

This remote resort is located in Australia's Red Centre, an hour's drive from Alice Springs. The mountainous area offers visitors several natural attractions such as Palm Valley and Ormiston Gorge. The resort employs between 6 and 16 workers at different times of the year, and is managed by Alex (the interviewee) and her husband. The resort offers a diverse number of accommodation types ranging from full self-contained motel rooms to camping sites that are also part of the business offerings. The owners pride themselves on quality service promising traditional and good, old-fashioned hospitality that is typically Australian.

Some of the resort facilities include a restaurant, a natural beer garden and a gallery. Functions, from weddings to conferences, are being held at the resort and are another channel for revenue. Tours are also available, and there are four to choose from. The Staff section on the website invites potential employees to submit an application, and in particular, travellers from overseas on a working holiday visa. The home page offers versions in German and French, to communicate better with some of the international audience that stays at the resort. It also has a direct link to the Facebook page.

4.8.2 The Resort's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 7

The page is being followed by 145 users at the time of interview. There are five applications, all are associated with Facebook: Wall, Info, Friend Activity, Photos and Events. The Info tab is very detailed and contains information about the resort and its facilities, unique characteristics and main mission. Despite its richness, the text is not written for the web (that is, easy to scan on a computer screen), and is therefore a little difficult to read.

The Photos tab contains 91 original photos that were uploaded by the page administrator and are organised in six different albums. Most photos are of celebrations held at the resort, as explained by Alex in the next section of this case study. The Events tab, on the other hand, has no entries that relate to future events and only provides information about one past event.

The page does not have a unique uniform resource locator (URL). As explained before, this is a short URL using the business name instead of a long string of letters and numbers, which makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page without having to search for it online (Reed 2011).

The page is updated at least once a week, but not in a regular order. Some days can have two or three updates one after the other, whilst the next update appears a week later. This feedback-related inconsistency may upset users who connected with the page originally in order to receive regular updates from the resort. The content features mainly photos from celebrations and events, as well as status updates about natural events in the area (for example, bushfires) and about new staff members. The general tone of the updates is light and friendly rather than formal. An interesting linkage to MySpace was done in one of the updates about a band playing at the resort in order to promote their performance. This update and others demonstrate that creativity in content selection is important to the page owner.

User participation is relatively high when taking into account the low number of fans the page has. This may be explained by the creative content that is posted on the page, as users tend to respond more to meaningful content that matches their preferences.

4.8.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 7

The following section summarises the interview with Alex (pseudonym), the resort's owner and social media administrator. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.8.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Alex decided to attend a social media seminar that was organised by Tourism Northern Territory, which provided the initial information foundation and stimulus for creating the resort's Facebook page ('*I did a seminar about getting business out of social media ... I just followed the directions and did that. I'm not entirely sure whether I set it up right because it was sort of hard to link it to the website. But because the Tourism NT is really proactive in helping operators get as active and market their businesses as successfully as possible, so I thought it's a good opportunity to go to the seminar.').* Her main reason to create the page, as explained in this answer, was to drive more business through Facebook. She also sees the business value of getting more room bookings via Facebook as a natural result of the customer benefit: *'I see it as a bit like a little club that people want to go into and feel like they get connected with your business.'* Also important in this instance is the involvement of the peak tourism body in the Northern Territory in small businesses' social media participation, and the support that it provides to encourage this participation.

Tracking of the page is done mainly via the email from Facebook: *'Facebook sends you weekly information to indicate how active the page has been, and apart from that I just check on it (that is, check the Facebook page directly for its progress). I'm a bit disappointed at the moment. I think it's because I'm not fully utilising all its capabilities ... not that many people actually interact with it. I want to know how to make it better.'* Alex understands that learning about the user behaviour and the growth of the page cannot be done only by the email from Facebook, and that more has to be done to fully utilise the potential of the platform. This awareness and willingness to learn and develop her social media skills are also evident in her response about linking the page to Trip Advisor, which did not succeed: *'I tried to link my Facebook page with Trip Advisor, but it didn't work out. I'll probably have another look at it*

at some stage … maybe I haven't set it up right. I'm not sure; I need to talk to someone who knows these things.'

Alex claims that the content on the page is diverse, and includes *'interesting things that happen in the region, anything special or characteristic to our region like when we had floods or bushfires.'* Another main type of content is celebrations and functions, *'like the Christmas celebrations, and then people see themselves on there. I wish I had known their names, because then I could have tagged them with a message.'* This last comment demonstrates Alex's creativity and familiarity with engagement techniques on Facebook. She understands that it is not just a static platform for posting content on, but rather a social arena with numerous opportunities to interact with the users – tagging is just one example.

Alex is confident that the content she publishes matches the expectations and preferences of the resort's Facebook users: *'People like to read about themselves. It's actually a way of touching base with people from your business on a really personal manner. It's not like sending them bulk emails to tell them about special offers. Normally they are curious about that (the content we post); it's just networking. Everything I can do to attract business to the resort rather than through a travel agent means more money in our pockets.'* This last quote encompasses another business goal that Alex has set when she created the Facebook presence. This particular business has a distinct preference for taking accommodation bookings directly, compared to those bookings that are made for the business through a third party and attract agent commissions. Facebook is directly responsible for reducing the latter.

Alex is not sure whether Facebook actually brings bookings to the resort: *'Well, I suppose it does but I have to say I'm not at all sure how much yet.'* She speculates that users might visit the Facebook page first, and then click on the link to the resort's website to make a booking (*'Maybe users go to Facebook and see the website, I don't know.'*). Evaluating Facebook's contribution to the overall bookings can be done by setting a unique telephone number or a booking code to a special offer that was posted to Facebook in order to track the bookings. By not using these methods, Alex is missing a valuable opportunity to learn about the monetary performance of the page, instead being sceptic about Facebook's contribution (*'I'm not sure yet how many bookings Facebook brings me, probably not a lot.'*).

The plans Alex has for the next year with regard to social media marketing reveal her interest in this field and in its potential contribution for her business: *'I want to try and leverage more of Facebook. I want to start blogging. At the moment I'm not tweetering but I was told I*

should. I'll probably learn to do that too. Interacting with the people from Trip Advisor is another thing. I believe that it's pretty huge and it's going to increase the presence for us.'

4.8.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

One hour a week is the time that Alex dedicates to work on the resort's Facebook page. With such a limited time frame it is difficult to gain full control over the page and its dynamics, as suggested by Sherman (2010). She is dissatisfied with the internet speed in the area, but says that it will not change anytime soon: *'I am not satisfied but it will not change because we have got a narrow band.'* Having a slow internet connection may affect Alex's social media work, as it requires more time to upload photos or videos, as well as source content on the web. However, Alex did not mention any of that during the interview.

Alex does not use any third party tools or applications in the page. She does not even use a basic photo editing tool to retouch photos *('I never do anything with them.').* By ignoring these third party tools she potentially misses an opportunity to improve the resort's Facebook presence. No funds are allocated to the maintenance of the Facebook page. Alex has not used Facebook Ads as she has *'spent enough money on advertising anyway, but maybe one day advertising on Facebook will be the way to go.'* With the lower costs that Facebook Ads charge, over traditional advertising platforms, Alex may find it more suitable for the resort's limited marketing budget. Therefore, it is suggested that Alex try using Facebook Ads in the future.

4.8.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Alex started the interview talking about the social media seminar that she attended through the Tourism Northern Territory organisation. She was very enthusiastic about the seminar: *'I'm about to finish a webinar program that's being run by an online marketing company, and quite blown away by all the topics, like keywords and SEO. I could attend a webinar or a seminar every bloody day. I'm learning heaps with what I can do with my website. So, I am taking around two seminars a year.'* Alex's answers throughout the interview revealed a good understanding of digital marketing in general (for instance, her acknowledgment that Facebook can serve as a web referral to the resort's website, the importance of search engine optimisation, and so on), and of social media activities in particular (the viral potential of tagging, for example).

When asked about the limitations she has with the resort's website, she replied: *'At the moment I don't have access to the content management … this will change and I will have access to the content management system, the website will be more sophisticated and interactive, all kinds of little tools like live chat room, stuff that changes, the opportunity to do short-term promotions.'* Alex's proactive attitude regarding the upgrade of the website demonstrates her desire to gain more control over it in order to better utilise the online business opportunities. *'There's so much exciting stuff that is happening online that will actually give us better reach into the tourism world and also do it with less commission.'*

4.8.3.4 Business Benefits

Alex treats Facebook presence as a social club for both past and potential resort guests. This 'club' is the extra customer value that the page brings to its fans. *'Just last night I was talking to some customers in the bar, and they have been following the page quite closely, so it helps people to connect with you and so it makes them more likely to make them want to go there.'* She makes a clear connection between the customer and the business benefits, and feels that socialising with the users on Facebook may lead to potential bookings. Those bookings will be free of agent commissions, meaning more money for the resort.

Alex is confident in her maintenance work on the page, and does not require any technical guidance. That is another business benefit, which evolves from the fact that Facebook is easy to use as a marketing platform, as suggested by Derham, Cragg et al. (2011).

Alex indicates that Facebook can assist her with cross-promotional marketing activities with other travel bodies such as Trip Advisor. This business benefit has the potential to reach new audiences (and potentially new bookings) by utilising bigger databases, both domestic and international, that those bodies usually have.

4.8.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 7

Table 4.7 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.7: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 7

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. The decision to create the page started in a social media seminar, arranged by the local DMO 2. The main goal is to drive more business through Facebook, rather than to pay agent commissions 3. Tracking is done mainly via the email from Facebook 4. The content is diverse and matches the audience 5. Not sure whether Facebook brings any bookings 6. Plans for next year: doing more in other social media platforms
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. The Facebook page is maintained once a week 2. No third party applications were used 3. The resort has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities 4. Internet speed is not ideal
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Alex attends regular social media seminars and webinars 2. She does not have access to the content management system of the resort's website 3. The website will be upgraded soon to include more features, and a better content management system
Business Benefits	1. Facebook is like a social club that will drive more direct bookings to the resort 2. Ease of use: Facebook is a simple tool for Alex to work

	with
	3. Facebook is a good tool for cross-promotional marketing activities

4.9 Accommodation Provider 8

4.9.1 Business Background – Accommodation Provider 8

This country hotel is located near Mount Gambier in South Australia and is surrounded by lush farmland. It is managed by a husband and wife, with the latter being the great granddaughter of the man who built the original building in 1886. In addition to them, the small business employs 12 people.

The hotel contains three motel rooms on a bed and breakfast basis; each can accommodate up to four people. It also has a restaurant that can cater for up to 120 people, as well as a traditional Australian pub. Events of all kinds play a central part in the hotel's routine, from weddings and conferences to live shows that are being held at the bar. There are several ways in which the hotel tries to generate more revenue other than room bookings, such as having theme nights to drive more food sales at the restaurant, operating a new playground for children and developing a special menu for kids.

There are several awards that the hotel has won, including the Best Pub Style Accommodation for 2009 by the Australian Hotel Association of South Australia. The hotel's website features a foursquare widget, which allows users to 'check-in' via their mobile devices when they are visiting the hotel (Foursquare is a location-based social network that enables sharing real-time locations with friends online.).

4.9.2 The Hotel's Facebook Page – Accommodation Provider 8

The page is being followed by 1183 users at the time of interview. The page also displays mobile check-ins to the hotel that stand at 405 as of that date. There are five applications, all associated with Facebook. Another application is provided by a third party and is called 'Vote for Us' and is part of a bigger campaign created by the Lifestyle Food Channel and Foxtel, one of Australia's leading cable TV companies. The objective of the application is to encourage users to vote for the hotel's restaurant for a chance to win a prize. Adding this

application to the page demonstrates an effort to improve the user experience and to increase the engagement between the page and its users.

The Info tab contains the basic information about the hotel, including its background, facilities and contact details. The text in the Description section was taken from the hotel's website, which may serve as evidence to Facebook's perception as an optional substitute to a website (which is an issue that was raised by the interviewee and will be discussed later). The 'About' tab reads 'a taste of the country', potentially leaving the user with open questions about the nature of the business.

The 'Photo' tab displays 78 original photos, organised in six albums. Most albums are untitled, which may affect the user experience as appropriate titles could have attracted more clicks and reduced uncertainties regarding the content. The photos focus on the nightlife at the bar, the live shows and the guests. There are neither room photos nor facilities photos.

The Events tab features a long list of events that have already taken place, which demonstrates a potentially good use of that feature to create engagement with the fans. However, there are currently no future events and so the tab looks empty when users first click on it. There are no videos published on the page, potentially limiting its visual offerings to photos only.

The page does not have a unique uniform resource locator (URL). This short URL uses the hotel's name instead of a long string of letters and numbers and makes it easier for users to memorise the direct address of the page (Reed 2011).

The content published on the page is mainly about the upcoming live shows at the hotel, photos of guests enjoying a karaoke night and of special events such as a magazine's photo shoot at the hotel, where users were invited to participate. A unique content activity was around the U.G.L.Y campaign of the Leukaemia Foundation, in which users were invited to choose the bartender of the year by donating to the foundation. There were several status updates about this initiative on the page to support it, which demonstrates the willingness to post meaningful content that is not focused exclusively on sales but rather on other topics. In addition, the page contains posts calling for potential artists to come and perform at the hotel, which is another interesting use of the page – this time for recruitment purposes.

The page is updated once a week, which may explain why the user participation is relatively low key with three user-initiated posts and several comments during a period of several months.

4.9.3 Features of Adoption – Accommodation Provider 8

The following section summarises the interview with Ben (pseudonym), the hotel's owner and social media administrator. It discusses the different features of social media adoption based on the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2.6 in the Literature Review chapter).

4.9.3.1 Strategy of Social Media Usage

Reducing the advertising spend was the main reason for Ben to create the page on Facebook: *'We just found that it's a cost-effective way of communicating to the younger age group. Our advertising budget is quite small, so to use something as cost effective as Facebook which is free is pretty good.'* In addition, Ben states his willingness to interact with the guests at the hotel as another reason for developing a Facebook presence: *'When you're looking at print media, radio and TV, it's great when you have that money to spend on advertising, but for small business you want the interaction and the feedback. We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us. That's why we try to post as many photos as we can. If you can get that interaction then you can know what works and what doesn't work, whereas with traditional forms of media it's hard to quantify that'* (the user engagement). It is clear that Ben recognises the social benefits that Facebook can bring to the business by allowing him to communicate with past and future guests directly and efficiently.

Ben also admits that the hotel's bartender, who is younger than him, was the one who suggested Facebook as a marketing platform originally *('I had a barman who is 10 years younger than me; he is heavily into social media so he took me into Facebook.').* This is an interesting example of how staff members can contribute to the development of the business based on their life experiences with social media.

Tracking of the page is done via the reports from Facebook: *'We get the Insights every couple of weeks, so I'll have a look at those. You can always see what works and what doesn't by the amount of interaction that you get.'* While it is true that reviewing the comments on the page are important in the tracking and monitoring process, checking real-time analytics is important too. When asked about Facebook Insights as a tracking tool, Ben said that he uses the tool and finds it handy, but would not rely on it too much: *'To be quite honest, that*

(Facebook Insights) wouldn't imply on how I use Facebook. It's handy to have, but won't affect the decisions that we make on Facebook.' Ben found it difficult to explain exactly why he finds Facebook Insights less central than it actually is. With no clear reason, ignoring the potential of this tool in assisting page administrators developing the page is disappointing.

When asked about the types of content that he publishes on the page, Ben mentioned the exact types that were identified in the previous section: *'We try to change it up (the content) a little bit. We try to have regular live entertainment in the hotel, so that always goes on there (on the page). We try to post photos of live events, birthdays, Christmas and other special events. We raised money for the Leukaemia Foundation on the page.'* Finally, Ben demonstrates his understanding of content in social media and the need to post meaningful and creative material to keep users engaged: *'I think that the bigger thing with Facebook is to keep it (the content) as varied as you can, rather than posting the same stuff over and over again. Some hotels are doing that and you see that their interaction levels are low. Facebook can only be handy if you've got the interaction with your customers.'*

An example of the creative attitude that Ben has regarding the content is when he adds the words 'Rock>Paper>Scissors' to some of the posts. When asked about it he explained that it is a promotion activity named after a drink that they sell: *'We play a game and if the customer wins they get it (the drink) for free. That's been a really good promotion that we've done; it gets people excited. It's different.'*

Ben does not think that the Facebook page has driven bookings to the hotel, but rather increased online exposure *('People now know that if they want to know what bands are playing, they will visit our Facebook page.').* His plans for the next year are to keep developing the page and to start creating videos, an element which is currently missing from the page.

4.9.3.2 Resources to Operate Social Media

Ben dedicates one hour a week to maintain the hotel's Facebook page. In such a limited time frame, it is questionable whether he can encourage users to participate in the discussions. Checking the page on a daily basis is important to the process of encouraging user feedback, as it tells users that the page administrator is aware of their needs. At the same time, it allows the page administrator to take control over the page rather than to use automated posts, as suggested by Sherman (2010).

Ben is satisfied with the internet speed in the area *('We've got broadband now. When I arrived 10 years ago we only had dial up, but now it's better.').* He does not use any programs or tools in his social media work other than an image resizing tool *('I don't use these tools; I try to keep it simple. I will link to Foursquare and similar social networks, but that's about it.').* Ben treats these third party applications and tools as complex elements and does not see the value they can bring to the page in making it more interesting and creative. At the same time, he ignores an application that does appear on the page and is called 'Vote for Us'. When asked about it he confirmed that it is an initiative of The Lifestyle Channel, encouraging users to vote for their favourite restaurant. He also said that there was nothing complex about adding the application to the page *('We got a message from them in the post about this opportunity, which included instructions on how to download the tab.').*

The hotel does not have a dedicated budget for social media. Ben confirms that he used Facebook Ads before but not anymore: *'We tried it in the past but didn't get a lot from it. We haven't used it since. It's hard. It's good that you can pinpoint it to your area rather than to all of Facebook, but you'd probably use it for a particular event. I'm not saying that I'll never use it, just not now.'* It is evident that Ben understands the targeting capabilities of Facebook Ads and has a positive attitude towards using them again for business purposes. At the moment he finds it difficult to use and less relevant.

4.9.3.3 ICT Skills and Knowledge

Ben finds Facebook easy for him to use *('Oh yes, it's a very basic platform.').* However, he feels that he needs assistance on how to better integrate it with the hotel's website: *'Direct marketing interests me. I would like to have a combined marketing approach of my website and how it links in with the Facebook page. I don't think that they blend very well right now. Some of the bigger hotels are doing it very well; they blend it all in very well. Our website is 8 years old now, and we're trying to find out if it's beneficial to actually update more and to get a more integrated approach.'* This answer reveals Ben's ability to plan a detailed marketing strategy, one that combines several channels. It is also evident that he is exploring what hotels are doing in terms of digital marketing and trying to learn from their best practices.

4.9.3.4 Business Benefits

Ben summarises the main business benefit that he is getting from Facebook in one sentence: *'Just to be able to direct market to our customers in a cheap way.'* Communicating with the hotel's clientele is a returning motif in the interview, as well as emphasising the minimal marketing budget that Ben has to work with. He values Facebook as a useful platform to achieve the communication goal and to overcome the budget constraints. The customer value comes from the ability to learn about the hotel and its offerings (for instance, live shows, special events, and so on) in an interactive way, as Ben explains: *'We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us.'*

Another benefit for the business comes from the fact that Facebook is easy to use as a marketing platform. Ben is confident maintaining the page and does not require any technical guidance.

The experimental nature of Facebook was demonstrated in Ben's answer about Facebook Ads. As mentioned earlier, he created a single campaign and was not sure if it was successful or not in terms of his objectives. However, he is willing to try it again in the future. This experimental freedom is a business benefit, as it allows Ben to search for the successful communication techniques with his fans without taking major financial risks.

Ben admitted that the idea to create a Facebook presence came from the bartender at the hotel, which demonstrates the business benefit of Facebook as a tool that promotes knowledge transfer within the business, as suggested by Langheinrich and Karjoth (2010). In this case, a young employee shared what he knows about Facebook as a business platform with his boss, leading to the creation of a new marketing channel for the hotel.

4.9.4 Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 8

Table 4.8 summarises the identified social media features grouped under the conceptual framework constructs. The noted implementation features provide insight into why the social media feature was adopted and how it was used.

Table 4.8: Identified Implementation Issues – Accommodation Provider 8

Framework Construct	Implementation of this Feature
Strategy of Social Media Usage	1. Using Facebook as a low-cost marketing platform 2. One of the main objectives is to perform direct marketing activities with the customers 3. Tracking is done via the emails from Facebook; Facebook Insights is used sporadically 4. There is a clear content strategy 5. No bookings were driven directly from Facebook 6. Ben plans to add videos to the page next year
Resources to Operate Social Media	1. The Facebook page is maintained once a week 2. A third party application was added to the page, though Ben perceives those applications as complex 3. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities 4. Internet speed is satisfying
ICT Skills and Knowledge	1. Facebook is easy to use 2. More training is required on how to better integrate Facebook with the website
Business Benefits	1. Facebook offers an affordable marketing platform 2. Facebook allows the business to communicate with its customers faster than any other media channel 3. Facebook is a simple tool for Ben to work with, which saves him time and money on training 4. An experiment with Facebook Ads was done; more

	may come in the future. These experiments did not put at risk the hotel's budget or credibility thanks to the experimental nature of Facebook
	5. Extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with the business easily
	6. Knowledge transfer within the business

4.10 Summary

This chapter presented eight case studies of Australian accommodation STEs who are early adopters of social media. All cases were primarily based on interviews with the owners or staff members of those SMEs that are responsible for maintaining the Facebook page of the business, supplementary information sourced from the business website and the examination of the Facebook page were also used to inform the cases.

The key social media implementation issues that were identified following the interviews were summarised for each STE participant and will be subsequently examined in Chapter 5 using a thematic analysis approach.

CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE STE CASE STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

The first research question directing this study focuses on how and why social media is being used by Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented a social media presence on Facebook. This chapter includes an analysis and discussion of the eight STE case studies that were documented in the previous chapter.

Theory-driven thematic analysis is the chosen method for identifying new and emerging themes in the case studies. This chapter can be viewed as providing a cross-case comparison which allows the important themes to be distilled. It allows the researcher to condense complex qualitative data via the identification of main themes that are prominent within that data (Howitt 2010). In this study, the researcher coded the data based on four theoretical themes that were identified as part of the conceptual framework. These themes are the main groups under which findings will be presented. The themes are: Strategy, Resources, ICT Skills, and Business Benefits.

Concepts were shaped based on comparisons between the responses in the cases (i.e. the adoption of social media) and the codes (or sub-themes) that emerged from the cases (see Appendix C for theme codes and table summary of themes). These concepts constitute the themes that emerged from each case. Finally, the identified concepts were compared to the literature in order to find correlations or new directions.

5.2 Themes Identified Relating to Strategy

It has been argued that STEs usually adopt a product approach and focus on short-term sales goals rather than trying to analyse the overall customer market and its requirements (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004). In order to utilise the marketing capabilities of social media effectively, and to minimise the negative effects that social media might have on businesses, such as unfavourable comments (Treadaway & Smith 2010; Russell 2010), it is important to examine the strategy of using social media for marketing purposes before launching the actual channels. This process can be done via SWOT analysis, which is a common analytical tool for the purpose of strategic planning (Piercy & Giles 1989). This section of the chapter records whether the participating STEs have a pre-planned strategy before launching the Facebook presence by examining their daily actions on the Facebook page and understanding their motivations to use the Facebook platform the way they do. The analysis of strategy-

related issues associated with adopting the Facebook social media platform in the cases identified six different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

1. **Motivation to Use Social Media:** A sub-theme that reflects the understanding of the value that social media (and Facebook in particular) can bring to the business; its familiarity in the online world (Shankland 2011; Derham, Cragg et al. 2011; Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010). This sub-theme also reflects the reasons why the business has to use Facebook (Larson 2009; Barnes & Mattson 2009; Turban & Volonino 2011).

2. **Evaluation of Social Media:** A sub-theme that reflects how the STEs track and monitor the Facebook page in order to learn about its performance (for instance, the number of users, most popular posts). The process of tracking and analysing the page is noted as being important in order to increase engagement rates (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010; Sherman 2010).

3. **Content:** A sub-theme that reflects content-related responses that reveal the types of content that the page is using, as well as its content strategy (Solis 2010; Novak 2010; Green 2009; Muniz & Schau 2011). 'Content' relates to text, photos and videos that appear on the Facebook page.

4. **Challenges with Operating Social Media:** A sub-theme that reflects the identified problems with Facebook and with maximising its potential. These are noted as being areas in which the businesses admit they need professional assistance in order to improve their presence (Treadaway & Smith 2010; Muniz & Schau 2011).

5. **Multi-channel:** A sub-theme that reflects how the STEs consider other social networks for marketing other than Facebook (for instance, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn). More and more social media platforms are offering brands and companies the option to create a business presence which complements their presence on Facebook (Roblek et al. 2013; Turban & Volonino 2011; Mangold & Faulds 2009).

6. **Social Media Plans for the Future:** A sub-theme that reflects how the future plans that the businesses have regarding social media, such as using new social platforms (for instance, Pinterest) or attending professional social media workshops (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010; Russell 2010).

5.2.1 Motivation to Use Social Media

There is a strong understanding among all interviewees of how important Facebook is as a platform for business development and marketing. They recognise the overall shift from push marketing towards a conversation mode, and are happy to adapt themselves to this change. Five interviewees mentioned a specific business reason for creating a page using Facebook, while two spoke about the importance of the social network among users worldwide and the need to be a part of it. The main reason to choose Facebook as a marketing platform for many STEs was cutting down advertising costs. The participating STEs see Facebook as an affordable alternative to the traditional media, which allows them to communicate with potential guests without struggling with budget limitations. This demonstrates how eager Australian accommodation STEs were to increase their presence in the local advertising scene in order to sell more rooms. It is important to highlight that while selling rooms was, and still is, the main business objective of these STEs, some of them clearly emphasised that they use Facebook as a communication tool with their past and future guests. They perceive the dynamic dialogue with the users as the beginning of a direct booking process, which will assist them to pay less for commission fees to travel agents and other third party booking providers. One participant explained it well in a single sentence, saying he sees the Facebook page as a social club that people want to go to in order to be in touch with the business.

Most interviewees had a clear vision as to why they are on Facebook, and why they prefer to develop a dialogue with the users rather than adopt a 'hard sell' approach, which reveals a good understanding of social media and the expectations associated with it. The shift from push marketing to a conversation mode stands in the background of all social networks (Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010). This idea was discussed by Muniz and Schau (2011), who explored the business strategy of ignoring brand conversation in social media in favour of non-commercial content. This basic principle is clear to all participating STEs.

It is also important to note that some STEs even see their Facebook page as a future substitute to the official website of the business, and state that they want to leverage more from the platform. This was also highlighted by Stephen Haines, commercial director of Facebook's UK operation, who suggested that Facebook's growing dominance might turn it into the hub of all commercial activity (Shankland 2011). For STEs, this trend can eliminate the burden of

creating and maintaining a website, a task some of them find complex and expensive due to a lack of technical skills and of sufficient funds.

5.2.2 Evaluation of Social Media

Tracking and monitoring the Facebook page in order to learn more about its growth, as well as to moderate it according to the business needs (responding to user comments, answering questions, deleting spam messages or posts that damage the brand reputation of the business), were mentioned as important by all participating STEs. However, of all tracking techniques available in the market, all interviewees mentioned the email sent by Facebook as the only monitoring tool that is used. While this email is a good report that summarises the recent performance of the page, it does not provide live data regarding the page that can help administrators in making changes when needed. Facebook's free analytics and performance tool, Facebook Analytics, was not reported to be in use by most participants. Those who were familiar with it mentioned that they used it sporadically and were not guided by it when it came to marketing decisions. This finding explains some of the Facebook-related problems that were mentioned by the participants: from not knowing if Facebook actually contributes to direct room bookings (as expressed by three participants), to not knowing what users wanted when they visit the page.

When it comes to analysing the user data and statistics, some participants simply browse the comments on the page as a means for determining all they need to know about the page and its performance. For example, one interviewee indicated that he could always see what worked and what didn't by the amount of interaction that was present. Others do not know what to do with the information they receive from Facebook on the monthly email, with one interviewee indicating the notifications to her personal email were passed to the owners, not knowing how to analyse the data herself. These types of responses reveal a problem with analysing fan data, which suggests the STEs do not thoroughly understand how to properly evaluate their Facebook page's performance. Arguably, without this understanding, it will be difficult for them to cater to the users based on their unique preferences and needs.

5.2.3 Content

All but one of the participants indicated that they had a clear content plan for their Facebook page. Their responses reveal that the STEs are constantly trying to publish a diverse range of content types, from status updates on events and local news to guest photos and videos. Most

of the STE owners and employees regularly searched for ways to be more creative with their content in order to provide meaningful information to their page users and to maintain the dialogue. One participant stated that the most crucial element with Facebook marketing was to keep the content as varied as possible, rather than posting the same things repeatedly. This understanding is in line with some of the content-related practices that were discussed in the literature review, which advised using content that is compelling, relevant and practical for the users (Solis 2010, Novak 2010). According to the authors, meaningful content will have a better chance of being shared by the users, and will lead to the desired viral effect that will spread the business message in the social circles on Facebook. However, only one participant was able to clearly define the target audience that the STE's page was aimed at, whilst the remaining STEs looked to a broad audience. This approach by the majority of STEs in not having at least a general knowledge about the people who visit the page has been noted as being an obstacle in providing them with content that is tailored for their unique needs and preferences (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010).

5.2.4 Challenges with Operating Social Media

During the interviews, several problems with maintaining the Facebook page were mentioned by the interviewees. The most common issue was not knowing whether Facebook had led to room bookings or not. None of the interviewees suggested a possible solution for this issue or indicated that it was a priority. This lack of initiative for finding a solution to such a central element in the performance of the page highlights the challenges in the STEs' Facebook strategy, as increasing accommodation bookings are an important business goal shared by the participants. Not knowing whether Facebook assists them with this goal or not is evidence of marketing work based on intuition rather than a solid strategy. This finding is in line with what other scholars have observed about STEs and their ICT-adoption difficulties (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006), which leads to intuitive decisions rather than to a solid business strategy in how they may use new processes or technology (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004; Ateljevic 2007).

5.2.5 Multi-channel

Only two of the participating STEs attempted to incorporate other social media platforms into their online presence. One STE explored options associated with Twitter and YouTube, however decided that Facebook was the platform to focus on. A second STE automatically posts all content from their Facebook page into their Twitter feed. Both cases, together with

the preference of the other participants to only use Facebook as a social media platform suggest that Australian accommodation STEs may not be ready to expand their social media boundaries by using other social media platforms. This may be in keeping with the conservative nature of the STEs who prefer to be cautious with their marketing activities by utilising the capabilities of social media such as Facebook – before adopting a second type of social media tool or platform. At the same time, several of the STEs stated they were planning to experiment with new social media tools in the near future. This demonstrates their innovative character as early adopters who feel comfortable with new ideas and/or products (Rogers 2003) as well as their understanding of the overall shift from push marketing towards a conversation mode when engaging their clients (Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010).

5.2.6 Social Media Plans for the Future

Half of the participants were asked about their future social media plans with all able to state exactly what they want to do in this area. The most common response was to expand the social media presence by using other platforms such as Twitter, as well as to add new types of content (for instance, video content). Having a clear vision of future activities is an important part of any marketing strategy, including a social media one.

This is a surprising finding as STEs usually tend to focus on the short term and avoid planning ahead (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004; Ateljevic 2007). Despite their common product approach, some STEs in this study were able to describe marketing-related ideas for the future.

5.2.7 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to Strategy

The analysis of social media strategy reported in the cases identified six different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Motivation, Evaluation, Content, Plans, Challenges, and Multi-channel. Figure 5.1 features the identified sub-themes under the Strategy construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.1 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Strategy construct

154
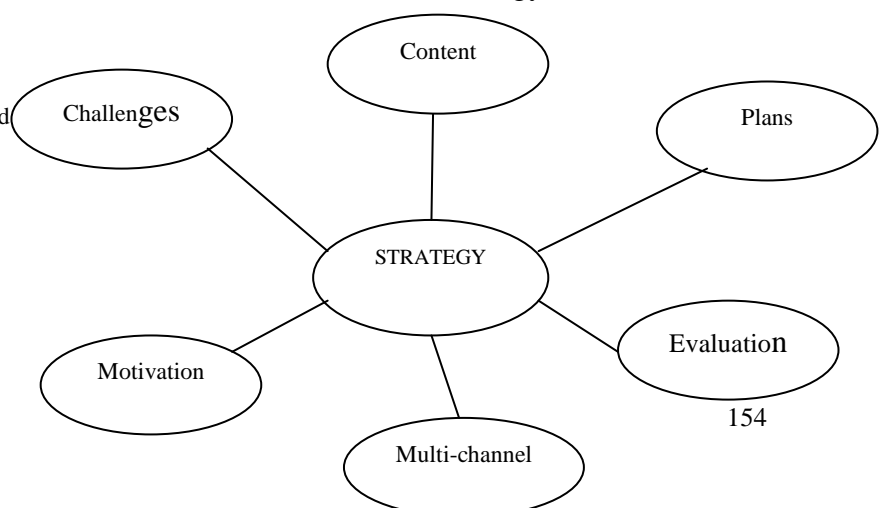
Based on the analysis of the case studies, it is evident that a social media strategy has not been developed by the STEs in a meaningful manner. However, the general manner of how the Facebook page should perform was developed by STEs through a process of experimentation and discovery. This finding also correlates with the current situation among other groups in the tourism industry such as destination marketing organisations who feel that they have not yet determined the optimal way to leverage the social media channel in their marketing strategy (HospitalityNet 2010). The participating STEs, as early adopters, recognised the importance of Facebook as a business tool and have experimented with it without building an initial plan. This is evident in their lack of knowledge regarding the target audience of the page, as well as their lack of use of Facebook Insights or other analytic tools in order to measure the performance of the page *('Facebook sends you a weekly update to say how active it has been, and apart from that I just check on it. Ideally it would be good to know how to improve this.'* APA7). However, the same spontaneous behaviour has led to some creative posts and ideas that assist the STEs to maintain an active discussion with the users, as described in the case studies.

It is important to note that most of the participating STEs indicated that they are either in the process of learning about social media via professional workshops, or wanting to attend such workshops should an opportunity arise.

After analysing the eight case studies, it is clear that while all STEs are aware of the immense influence that the Facebook social media platform has in the business world, they use it without a clear plan and also without long-term sales and marketing goals. The following are the main findings under the strategy construct:

- The STEs created a Facebook page mainly because it offered an affordable alternative to the more traditional advertising channels, and tried to develop an authentic dialogue with their audience that did not usually include direct sale offers.
- The STEs claimed they knew what their audience preferred with regard to content, but could not define their target audience and did not track the performance of the page using analytic tools.
- Several STEs showed initiative in trying to incorporate other social media platforms into their marketing mix. All businesses have planned to explore other types of social media platforms in future, as well as undertake further professional training.

5.3 Themes Identified Relating to Resources

As small businesses, the STEs tend to be mostly family-run businesses with limited knowledge of recent innovations and IT and resources – features that make it more difficult for them to adapt new technologies (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). In terms of dealing with the practices of implementing the Facebook social media platform among Australian accommodation STEs, this section will discuss the resources issues that are associated with the participating STEs in their social media activities.

The analysis of the resources issues associated with adopting the Facebook social media platform in the cases identified four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

1. **Internet Connectivity:** A sub-theme that reflects the quality of internet speed at the location of the business (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). It is an important sub-theme noted as it can explain challenges that the SMEs may have had with operating social media.
2. **Tools:** A sub-theme that reflects the use of third party software and applications in order to enrich the Facebook page with additional content (Arrington 2008; Munoz & Towner 2010). These applications can be ready-made by Facebook (Photos, for instance) or built especially for a particular page using a digital agency.
3. **Budget:** A sub-theme that reflects the budget or funds dedicated specifically to social media marketing (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006; Harris & Rae 2009). While using Facebook is free of charge, there are certain costs associated with using the page that owners need to be aware of when they wish to use advertisements, build applications, or attend professional training.
4. **Time:** A sub-theme that reflects the time devoted to planning the Facebook page, as well as the number of times (frequency) that the page is maintained (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010).

5.3.1 Internet Connectivity

In spite of the remote location of some of the participating STEs, most owners/managers are happy with their business' internet connectivity. The ability to enjoy broadband internet can reduce browsing and uploading times, which eases the maintenance of websites and pages in

social networks. Therefore, internet connectivity was an important resourcing issue to consider when establishing a Facebook operation of the participating businesses. However, one regionally located business indicated that the internet was very slow due to the poor infrastructure that was available. Given the many regional and remotely located STEs in Australia, poor internet infrastructure is potentially a limiting issue for other STEs that find themselves in a similar geography. However, although the internet was reported to be slow by this Facebook early adopter, the owners were still able to maintain a social media presence without the fast internet connection.

5.3.2 Tools Needed to Operate Social Media

Five of the participants have indicated that they are using third party applications and tools in order to enrich the content on their Facebook page. These applications, which are reflected in the inclusion of games, a booking widget, or a competition widget, contribute to the user enjoyment of the STE page. Enjoyment was found to be the main reason to join social media by Lin and Lu (2011), who suggest that social platforms should invest resources in developing more applications for fun and pleasurable experiences. Indeed, using external tools such as a video camera and a photo editor can assist page administrators with creating varied content rather than merely textual posts. Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) suggest that users will share good, meaningful content – which may lead to the anticipated viral effect. This content has to be compelling, relevant and practical. All the STEs in this study understand that, and as a result, improve their content offerings by retouching photos or creating videos of the property.

Those STEs that did not add applications to their page or use external tools indicated that the perceived complexity of these entities was a barrier to their use by the businesses. One participant indicated that he was aware of where he could add applications to the Facebook account, but could not find out how to do it. However, others indicated that they were not aware at all of the availability of these tools. As many of these applications and tools are easy to use and free of charge, basic training on how to enrich social media content could allow STEs to be aware of the different digital resources for the benefit of the users and the business.

5.3.3 Social Media Budget

Only one STE had a specific budget allocated to undertaking social media tasks. The remaining STEs had not considered investing money in their Facebook presence as Facebook is a free platform that does not cost them anything. Considering that for most STEs the main reason for choosing Facebook as a marketing platform was to reduce advertising costs, it was surprising to find out that only one STE allocated funds for social media. Some of the applications and tools used to operate social media that were mentioned in the previous section do not come free, and neither do social media workshops and training. Having no funds to spend on social media may impact the maintenance and quality of the Facebook presence in the long run, as Facebook pages need continual developing and businesses are constantly looking for new and engaging ways to make them more entertaining (Lin & Lu 2011). Seemingly, STEs will need to consider re-allocating funds from their traditional advertising channels to address their social media presence. One STE participant indicated that he was already doing this, moving allocated funds away from traditional media (that are normally very expensive) and redirecting them towards his Facebook activities. If the original idea was to reduce advertising costs, then STEs should do exactly that rather than eliminate the marketing budget altogether.

Arguably, the issue of not having a special budget for social media presence is connected to the lack of a clear social media strategy, as noted in the previous section. Allocating funds for a business goal demonstrates that the business sees this as a work in progress towards achieving an outcome, rather than an experiment. At this stage it seems that most STEs consider their Facebook platform page an experiment in spite of them being early adopters.

The only costs budgeted for by STEs in this study were for Facebook Ads, which reflects paid advertising that works virally by being placed on a Facebook's user profile in accordance with the personal preferences and interests of the user (Weintraub 2011). There was a pattern was followed by all STEs who used Facebook Ads. This included a decision to try the ads for a small fee, then experiencing disappointment regarding the low number of clicks that the ads generated, and finally deciding to try it again sometime in the future to see if there was any improvement. This pattern is consistent with the experimental nature of these early adopters who wish to explore recent innovations to improve the business. Harris and Rae (2009) suggest the term 'Gifted Amateurs' was applicable to the early adopters that experimented with Web 2.0 tools in order to respond to their business needs. Arguably,

having a clearer social media strategy as well as a dedicated budget the participants could have potentially improved the results of their Facebook Ads, as recent innovations usually require a learning curve in order to use them better.

5.3.4 Time to Operate Social Media

The time resource is a central one when it comes to social media maintenance. Time needs to be invested for developing new ideas to make the social media presence more entertaining and to evaluate performance (Brogan 2007; Blog 2009; Novak 2010). In this study, only two of the participating STEs indicated that they dedicate specific time for social media activities on a daily basis. The others mentioned that they check their Facebook page once a week or once a fortnight. Checking pages over a weekly or fortnightly period does not allow the page administrators to be responsive to user questions and comments, making fans wait for an official response instead of taking advantage of what can be a potential booking. In addition, negative comments about the business that ideally should be dealt with immediately are left to a later time.

Time as a resource is important as all STEs recognised the growing importance of the Facebook platform to the business, indicating that they wish to expand their social media presence and start using other social networks. This expansion must consider the time resource as an issue, as the current situation does not reflect the allocation of appropriate time for the maintenance of Facebook alone, not to mention other platforms such as Twitter or YouTube that may also be adopted in the future.

5.3.5 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to Resources

The analysis of social media resources reported in the cases identified four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Internet Connectivity, Tools, Budget, and Time. Figure 5.2 features the identified sub-themes under the Resources construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.2 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Resources construct

159
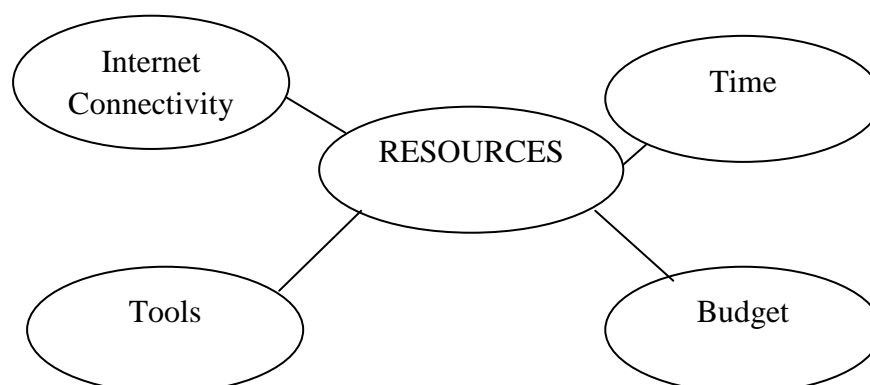
The participating STEs revealed in their interviews several resource issues that affect their social media performance. Some of these issues are typical to those mentioned in the relevant literature about STEs and their difficulties in adopting ICTs (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006). The following are the main findings under the resource construct:

- Not enough time is invested in maintaining and developing the Facebook presence. This time is required in order to track the progress of the Facebook page, develop new content, and respond to user queries.
- No budget is specifically allocated to social media: Facebook is treated like a free tool to experiment with rather than a media platform just like other forms of paid media.
- Facebook Ads are not fully utilised due to lack of budget and time, which are required in order to optimise them based on performance.
- Third party apps are used in order to enrich the page.
- Internet connectivity was not found to be an issue, as even the single STE who complained about internet speed did manage to maintain his Facebook page regularly.

5.4 Themes Identified Relating to ICT Skills and Knowledge

Australian STEs, who comprise between 90–95% of all the tourism businesses in the country (Davidson, Burgess et al. 2006), find it difficult to adopt new technologies. One of the explanations for this situation is that the level of technology-related skills is insufficient. Bridging this digital gap requires an intensive learning process (Braun 2002). As part of the first research question of this study, dealing with the implementation practices of social media among Australian accommodation STEs, this section will examine the ICT-related skills and knowledge that those STEs use while maintaining and developing their social media presences.

The analysis of ICT skills and knowledge issues associated with adopting the Facebook social media platform in the cases identified three different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

1. **Confidence:** A sub-theme that reflects the confidence of the participants with regard to using recent innovations (Facebook in this case) for business purposes

(Rogers 2003; Braun 2002). Their confidence is dependent on previous ICT knowledge and Facebook's degree of user friendliness.

2. **Assistance:** A sub-theme that reflects the areas in social media marketing and ICT in general that the participants felt they need assistance with (Braun 2002), whether it be social media training or more general e-commerce training that is related to their daily work as tourism marketers.

3. **Web Maintenance Skills:** A sub-theme that reflects the operation of the official website of the STEs and serves as another reference to their ICT adoption characteristics. The link between the website and the Facebook page can explain certain findings related to Facebook's maintenance.

5.4.1 Confidence

Only three participants stated that Facebook is easy for them to use, thanks to its intuitive and friendly user interface. Those particular STEs were the ones who also showed a greater level of initiative when it came to embedding third party applications on the page, investing more time and effort in creating interesting content and being curious about the e-commerce possibilities that Facebook can offer. These characteristics are in line with Rogers' (2003) definition of early adopters as people who feel more comfortable with new ideas, innovations and/or technology. Therefore, it is suggestive that a good practical understanding of the Facebook platform allows the page administrator to go beyond the ordinary page maintenance and to become more active in looking for ways to improve it. At the same time, it does not mean that those STEs are utilising Facebook features fully, despite the way they perceive themselves as explained in the Strategy and Resources analysis (for instance, the poor understanding that STEs had in Facebook Insights as a tool that allowed them to learn about the performance of the page).

5.4.2 Assistance

Almost all STEs felt that they could use additional training in ICT areas that were related to using the Facebook social media platform for marketing purposes. The most important areas that STE managers needed assistance with were video editing and photo editing, which are related to content development. The STEs admit that creating fresh content regularly was a difficult task, and that creating original videos or improving images with advanced editing tools assisted them by focusing on visuals rather than on words. In addition, they recognise

the popularity of video and video websites such as YouTube, and have commenced working towards expanding their social media presence with regard to this. For instance, one participant stated that she would love to learn more about creating videos on YouTube and tag them in the appropriate manner in order to increase exposure. Another STE expressed her difficulties with trying to link the hotel's Facebook page with the third party tourism site provider, Trip Advisor, saying she did not know how to set it up.

Some STEs requested assistance with areas which relate more to digital strategy and development, like how to better integrate Facebook with the official website of the business ('*I would like to have a combined marketing approach of my website and how it links in with the Facebook page. I don't think that they blend very well right now.' AP8),* or how to utilise Facebook as an e-commerce tool ('*I don't know about the lucrative side of Facebook. I don't know how to make money from it. There are programs out there marketing that, but I don't trust them enough to buy them.' AP6).* Notably, these STEs require assistance with different levels of social media marketing – it is not about how to operate social media tools but rather how to improve their digital presence while taking into account factors that allow them to integrate marketing and e-commerce with Facebook. This observation does not stand in line with work done by Monday, Burgess et al. (2009) who were surprised to discover that most of the South Australian STEs in their study displayed a good level of ICT understanding.

Despite the above, only one participant clearly indicated that she attended courses and workshops related to the areas in which she needs assistance that included online marketing (using social media). The other STEs did not mention any practical workshops that assisted them to gain the knowledge they wanted, but rather spoke in general about future plans and aspirations regarding accessing assistance to improving their knowledge and training regarding social media. Interestingly, one participant could not think of any technology-related topics she needed assistance with, simply because she did not perceive Facebook as an information communication technology. This is potentially a problematic situation, as the participant may not consider improving her practical skills without understanding that Facebook is an online digital platform. An important consideration here is that the responsibility of the administrator of the Facebook page includes keeping up to date with the related trends and advances.

5.4.3 Web Maintenance Skills

The STE owners and managers were also asked about the maintenance of the business' official website, to try to understand more about their ICT skills and knowledge and to try to relate the findings to their social media performance. It was found that most STEs only performed basic tasks on the websites (for instance, adding text) but left the rest of the work to a third party provider who had built the website originally and had greater control over its content management system. One participant even claimed she has no access to the content management system of the website, which completely left her behind in terms of updating the website. This situation impedes the development of ICT-related skills as the STEs rely on external programmers to perform most of the web-related tasks for them.

It further explains why most STEs do not make full use of Facebook's more advanced features, such as Facebook Insights or Facebook Ads. STEs often treat their Facebook presence as another web presence, similar to their website. However, Facebook as a social network requires ongoing maintenance that the official website does not necessarily need (at least not in the same frequency). In addition, STEs' reliance on third party providers makes them feel less responsible for their online presence, which includes their Facebook presence.

5.4.4 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to ICT Skills and Knowledge

The analysis of ICT skills and knowledge reported in the cases identified three different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Confidence, Assistance, and Web Maintenance Skills. Figure 5.3 features the identified sub-themes under the Skills construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.3 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Skills construct
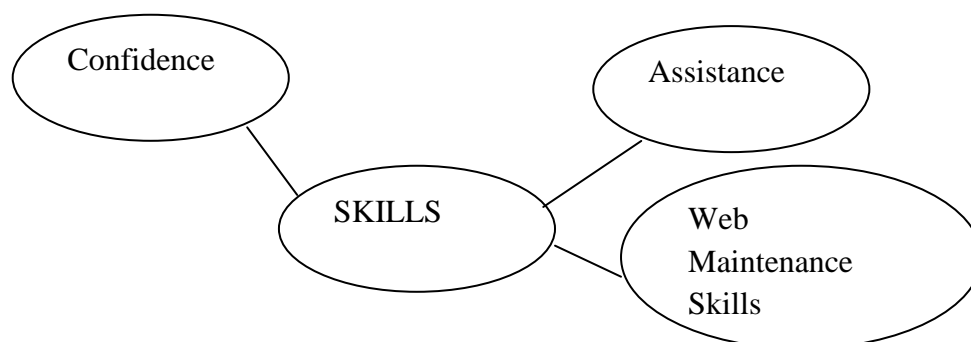
The case studies revealed a variety of ICT skill and knowledge issues among all eight STEs. The following are the main findings under the ICT skill and knowledge construct:

- Most STEs admit they need assistance and training in ICT-related topics, from 'hands-on' skills to the more strategic level of ICT operation and development.

- Most STEs do not actively seek ways to get the assistance and training they want, which only preserves the current situation.

- Website-related work is mostly done by external vendors. In order to increase their confidence in ICT (and, as a result, in social media marketing and Facebook marketing in particular), STEs need to be more active and start with the most basic element of their website presence.

5.5 Themes Identified Relating to Benefits

The literature review chapter presented the benefits that STEs can realise from using ICTs and social media in particular. These include whether it is exposing the business to the global market and reaching new audiences (Buhalis 1998), strengthening the relationships between tourism businesses and their clients via blogs (Schmallegger & Carson 2008), or helping the business with reputation management and destination branding (Eye for Travel 2009). As part of the first research question of this study, dealing with the implementation practices of social media among Australian accommodation STEs, this section examines the benefits that these STEs see in their social media activities.

The analysis of social media benefits associated with adopting the Facebook social media platform in the cases identified five different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

1. **Platform Characteristics:** A sub-theme that reflects Facebook's features that makes it easy to use, easy to track and measure business performance, and easy to experiment with (Arrington 2008; Axon 2010; McCarthy 2010). These features were described by the STE participants as a defining aspect of Facebook that made it an excellent marketing tool for them.

2. **Customer Value:** A sub-theme that reflects the perceived special value that fans and customers are getting from the Facebook page. The value of the page is aligned with bookings, providing information about the business, allowing guests to revive holiday experiences, and function as a communication channel (Monday, Burgess et al. 2009; Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. 2010).

3. **Social Media Reach:** A sub-theme that reflects the manner in which Facebook assists the business in accessing a larger audience, and as a consequence, provides better segmentation options in the marketing process, including cross-promotional opportunities.

4. **Savings:** A sub-theme that reflects the manner in which Facebook assists the STEs to save money by replacing the traditional and often expensive forms of promotional advertising.

5. **Knowledge Transfer:** A sub-theme that reflects the knowledge transfer opportunities within the tourism industry because of using the Facebook platform. These opportunities emerged when STE workers exchange ideas using the social media channel or when workers in the business who are more familiar with social media encourage the owner to start using it for business purposes.

5.5.1 Platform Characteristics

The main benefit as reported by most participants was Facebook's user interface and the different publishing options that it offered. Almost all STEs claimed that one of the important aspects associated with using Facebook for business purposes was that it did not require a steep learning curve. This relates with the findings of Derham, Cragg et al. (2011) who indicated that one of the business benefits of Facebook was being able to adopt and use it quickly without any prior knowledge. However, in this study the participants did not fully utilise Facebook's capabilities when it comes to tracking and applications, as previously discussed. Therefore, the perceived easy use of Facebook related to the basic operation of the platform (that is, creating the page, uploading images and adding comments). There are advanced features on Facebook that were found not to be adopted by most of the STEs (these were previously mentioned in the Challenges and Assistance sections of this chapter).

Apart from the ease of use features, other Facebook benefits mentioned by the participants related to how the platform allowed them to track their fans and their activities on the page (that is, commenting on posts, sharing with friends, and so on). Another benefit of the platform related to the experimental nature of Facebook, allowing them to promote their business in different ways without losing money for unsuccessful attempts. While the latter was evident in the STEs responses and actions, the former was not fully utilised by them due to STEs not readily analysing fan data and measuring the performance of the page. The

process of tracking and analysing the page is essential in order to increase the engagement rates (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010; Sherman 2010). The STEs mention tracking as a benefit, but in reality, they choose not to utilise this platform tool.

5.5.2 Customer Value

It was noted by Monday et al. (2009) that extra customer value is a major benefit of ICT adoption by STEs. Most of the participants in the study mentioned customer value as a business benefit. Some focused on the fact that Facebook provided fans with useful information about the property, saying they realised that a lot of their customers who searched for the business online wanted to engage with them and know about what happens at the hotel, as well as researching for tourist information about the hotel. Others claimed that Facebook was a platform that provided customer value by reviving holiday memories for previous guests achieved by posting photos of the time guests spent at the hotel. These photo posts were further supported by appropriate comments.

An interesting observation was given by some STEs, who stated that Facebook was helpful for guests as a communication tool between young travellers (*'It's a massive medium that young people are travelling around the world with and most travellers are keeping in touch with each other around the world.' AP6).* Arguably, this is a clear example of how STEs are willing to offer their page as an arena for discussions between travellers, on issues that do not actually relate to the business itself. This is a mature approach to social media marketing which recognises the electronic value of word of mouth and user generated content (Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010). Seemingly, the STEs understand that they will benefit from encouraging their audience to converse with other travellers on any topic, as it may end up promoting future bookings.

5.5.3 Social Media Reach

It was noted earlier in this chapter that all STEs are well aware of the immense power that social media, and Facebook in particular, has as a communication channel. Global exposure, as noted by Buhalis (1998), is an ICT-related benefit for STEs found to be very valuable for participants. The STEs awareness of this communication feature was perceived as beneficial in that knowing it allowed them to be in a position to access a new audience of potential guests. In turn, this new potential audience via the Facebook platform could potentially engage different groups of people and be able to communicate with each group more

effectively. One STE gave the example of a guest from Sweden, who shared a photo of the hotel property with his parents on Facebook – the parents then forwarding the photo to their friends in the Baltics, allowing a network of people to be exposed to the business. This example suggests that STEs understand that social media can help them with reaching not just the local clientele but also guests from other cities, states and countries.

Some STEs also mentioned the cross-promotional activities they can conduct on Facebook by linking to other sites, such as exchanging links with their page on Trip Advisor (a website for hotel reviews) or simply working on marketing activities in parallel with the business website (that is, referring users from the Facebook page to the website and vice versa). These steps utilise Facebook's reach in order to maximise online brand exposure. At the same time, it is important to note that some STEs felt that they need more assistance with cross-marketing techniques to take full advantage of the potential benefits.

5.5.4 Savings

Although STEs usually have limited budgets and resources (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006), only three participants mentioned Facebook's low maintenance cost as a business benefit (*'I was looking for other ways to advertise ... connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising.' AP2*). This comes as a surprise as almost all STEs participating in this study expressed their satisfaction with the cost aspect at least once during each interview. The researcher tends to think that some STEs might have felt embarrassed to mention the cost aspect as a benefit, and therefore focused on other areas such as reach, guests and so on, which may be perceived by them as more appropriate.

5.5.5 Knowledge Transfer

Braun (2002) claimed that developing strong business connections between STEs, and a culture of trust, might help in overcoming some of the obstacles in the uptake of networked technologies. This was evident with two of the participating STEs who perceive Facebook-related knowledge transfer within the business itself and with the greater business community as benefits (*'I had a barman which is 10 years younger than me; he is heavily into social media so he introduced me to Facebook.' AP8*). Another STE owner mentioned a colleague from the local tourism industry who came up with a marketing slogan that he later used on the STEs' Facebook page. Arguably, this reflects an example of how open early adopters can

be in their willingness to brainstorm with other close entities (a team worker or a business colleague in these cases) and learn from them (Rogers 2013). This is especially relevant in social media, which is more popular among the younger audiences. Therefore, STEs managers and owners should utilise the digital knowledge that exists within the business by encouraging their young workers to contribute ideas and thoughts on social media marketing.

5.5.6 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to Benefits

The analysis of benefits reported in the cases identified five different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Platform Characteristics, Guests, Social Media Reach, Savings, and Knowledge Transfer. Figure 5.4 features the identified sub-themes under the Benefits construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.4 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Skills construct
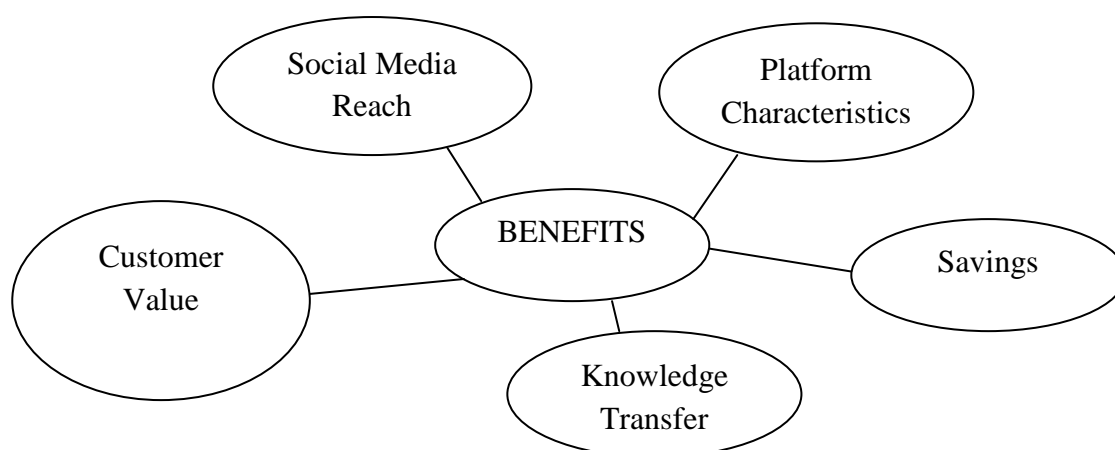
The participating STEs revealed in their interviews important benefits that emerged from their social media activities. Some of these are similar to those mentioned in the relevant literature about STEs and their ICT-related benefits (Buhalis, 1998; Braun, 2002; Derham, Cragg et al. 2011). The following are the main findings under the Benefits construct:

- The intuitive user interface of Facebook made most STEs believe that it does not require much learning in order to operate it, and therefore it is considered a business benefit. However, this has to be related to the basic operations of Facebook as some STEs later expressed their need to learn about fully utilising more complex aspects of the Facebook platform.

- Seeing the Facebook page as a communication tool between travellers, as well as a platform to revive holiday memories, was considered a benefit by STEs, believing it would lead to hotel bookings of new and returning guests.

- Utilising Facebook's popularity in order to reach new audiences, both local and international, and being able to segment potential customers more effectively were also considered business benefits. With more professional training this reach could be used for cross-marketing activities, as stated by some STEs.

- Cost was stated as a benefit by some STEs, enjoying the ability to promote their business without spending any money.

- Knowledge transfer opportunities inside and outside the business were identified and stated by two STEs as benefits. These opportunities could multiply and grow the digital presence of the business if STE managers and owners would learn how to utilise the digital knowledge of their young workers.

5.6 Summary of Thematic Analysis of Case Studies

The first research question directing this study examines how and why social media is being used by Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented social media presence on Facebook. The in-depth case studies in the previous chapter documented the manner in which Facebook was being used from a 'how' and 'why' perspective. The findings from the thematic analysis of case studies provided further understanding of the adoption of Facebook, bringing to light the current social media implementation practices of these STEs, along with some associated challenges.

The analysis of case studies identified eighteen different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Motivation, Evaluation, Content, Plans, Challenges, Multi-channel, Internet Connectivity, Tools, Budget, Time, Confidence, Assistance, Website, Platform Characteristics, Extra Customer Value, Social Media Reach, Savings, and Knowledge Transfer. All of the sub-themes are in line with past findings except for Multi-Channel, Plans and Assistance, which emerged from the data collection.

Figure 5.5 features the identified sub-themes under the four analysis constructs in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.5 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the four analysis groups
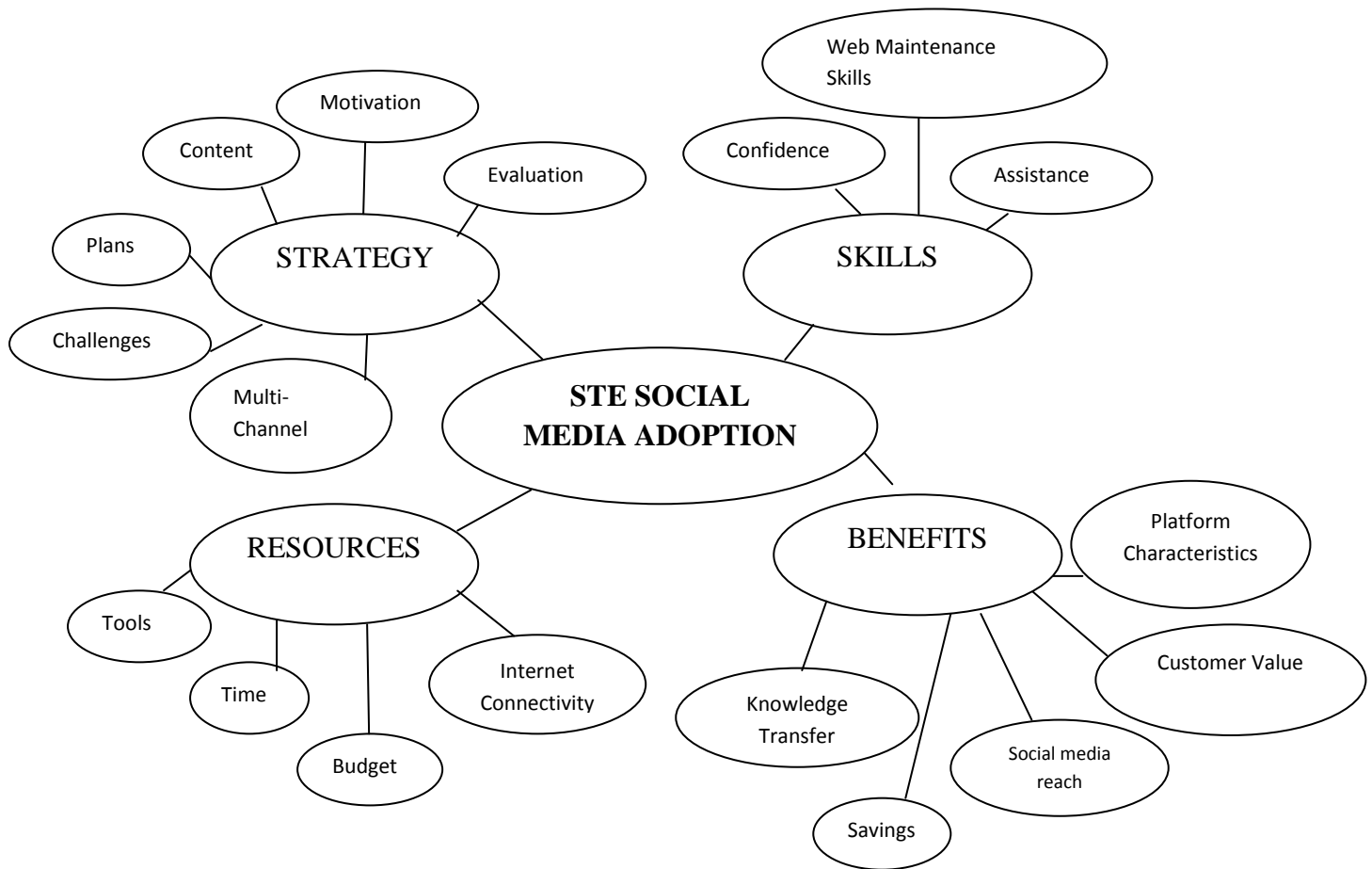
It is clear that the STE participants use social media as an experiment to address some of their marketing needs. In developing their pages on Facebook, most business owners did not have a clear business strategy. Instead, they relied on intuition to determine the progress of their page using fan comments and 'Likes' as a guide. This situation allowed them to be free and open in their exploration of social media marketing and to search for the most effective way to communicate with their users. This experimental freedom also allowed the STEs to use applications made by third party providers, which have the potential to increase user engagement with the page. Some of them were open to adopt ideas from the broader tourism community, as well as to use local knowledge by encouraging staff to be more active in social media. However, these efforts were not accompanied by a thorough tracking process, which is important to undertake in order to learn how the Facebook presence is performing.

The STEs did not invest a sufficient amount of time working on their social media presence or have a dedicated social media budget. This situation indicates that this is all an experiment for them rather than a pre-defined project, which tends to be a feature of early adopters.

Because they are early adopters, these STEs do not actively look for assistance with the areas that they recognise as difficult. They admitted that they need assistance with using the Facebook platform across a range of areas that included content development to cross marketing. All STEs had an acknowledged awareness as to why they use social media, and recognise the business benefits of using the platform. The reasons varied from providing the clients with a communication platform that may increase the global exposure of the business, to using a cheaper alternative to the traditional modes of advertising. One reason for using social media for business purposes was shared by all STEs, and that is the understanding of how powerful social media is in today's world. They all see the importance that Facebook has as a platform for business development and marketing, and recognise the overall shift from push marketing towards a conversation mode.

CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF USER PERCEPTIONS TO STE FACEBOOK PRESENCE

6.1 Introduction

The second research question of this study focused on users' perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that had implemented the social media Facebook platform. Several authors have examined why people turn to social media and suggest reasons that vary from the 'Evaluative Social Identity' (Lampe et al. 2010, p. 8) to perceived enjoyment (Kim et al. 2010). According to the authors, once engaged with social media, users make several different uses of the platform with each person having a goal and a preference – some might use it in order to improve their social status, others use the social channel to seek online information, while some use social media as an entertainment source. Online open-ended questionnaires were published on the Facebook pages of six of the accommodation STEs participating in the study. All the STE owners and managers highlighted the questionnaire to their fans and encouraged them to participate and provide feedback on their user experiences associated with visiting the business' Facebook site. Overall, 21 users submitted their responses. Eight further users were also contacted by phone and interviewed in order to explore some of the pertinent and relevant issues noted in the user responses to questions. In addition, the researcher analysed user messages and comments that were posted on the STE Facebook pages during the 2012 calendar year. Overall, 1265 user comments were examined, with a final set of 76 comments being found to be meaningful for analysis. Comments were considered meaningful if they related to one or more of the emerging sub-themes, which were shaped following the questionnaire analysis. The researcher was looking for comments that were content rich, and therefore ignored those with only one or two words, as well as comments which did not contribute to the discussion (for instance, commercial content that was posted by other businesses in the region).

Finally, the data was coded using thematic analysis, which was the chosen method for identifying new and emerging themes in the user responses. In this study, the researcher coded the data based on main themes (or dimensions) that were identified as part of the conceptual framework. The themes were based on user perceptions and related to: Expectations from Social Media, as well as the Value and Benefits of Social Media. The later set of themes was merged into one ('Benefits of Social Media'), as most users could not distinguish between them.

The discussion of findings in the chapter was shaped based on comparisons between the user perceptions, the conceptual framework themes, and the sub-themes that emerged from them. The chapter also includes direct user-attributed quotes or comments. When these quotes appear they also denote the small accommodation provider of which the fan is a member. Finally, the identified concepts were compared to the literature. These concepts were based on the online behaviours and feedback of users and were an element that informed the proposed implementation model for social media usage by STEs (Chapter 7).

The quotes presented in this chapter are a selected group of user responses from the online questionnaires as well as user comments that were posted on the examined STE Facebook pages during 2012 (For a listing of comments, user questionnaire data and coding used, refer to sections D, E and F in the appendices.).

6.2 Themes Relating to User Expectations of Social Media

Users have different goals in mind when using social media and perceive the phenomenon that is social media and its importance differently. For example, Lampe et al. (2010) claim that the main reason for a user to open an account in an online community is the 'Evaluative Social Identity' (p. 8), which is an estimation of how central the user thinks he or she is in the social network. The most important use of Facebook, according to Joinson (2008), is the activity of social surveillance, which allows the user to locate old friends or colleagues and to learn about their progress in life, such as new jobs that they have undertaken, a change in their marital status or a personal achievement. The analysis of user responses identified four sub-themes that were associated with people's expectations when using the STE's Facebook page. These sub-themes were:

1. **Visitor Information:** a sub-theme that reflected the fan content that was published by the STE owners, managers or staff members – who can be viewed as Facebook page administrators. This information was both textual and visual and was used to support the promotion efforts of the business and to enrich people's knowledge of its products and the region in which the STE was located.

2. **Competitions:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of competitions as a leading fan engagement technique by page administrators. Competitions on Facebook can have different formats and styles, from a photography contest to a quiz, and usually include prizes to entice the STE's users.

3. **Communication:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as a communication channel between the business and its guests, as well as between guests themselves.

4. **Sales:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as an e-commerce platform for the business, in order to increase room bookings as well as revenue from food and beverage sales.

6.2.1 Visitor Information

Half of the questionnaire's respondents mentioned visitor information as the main reason that they followed the STE's Facebook page. They expressed interest in knowing what was happening in the business that included information on any upcoming events *('What time is the actual event? We are hoping to arrive between 12 and 1 on Saturday' AP 8)*, new menus that the restaurant was introducing *('What are tonight's special toppings?' AP 8)* or information on any special offers or promotional deals. Users also wanted to know more about the region where the business was located which were reflected in Facebook comments such as *'Hi, I'm visiting Perth next week and plan to take a bus to Albany. Is there any 2–3 day tour to the wild land around?' (AP 6),* or *'Hi guys, do you got a bus on Friday night from bay?' (AP 5).*

As all respondents were past guests or clients of the STEs, their continuous interest in the business demonstrates the potential that social media has in maintaining ongoing relationships between businesses and customers. These relationships, which can be associated with the concept of social surveillance (Joinson 2008), have become possible due to the adoption of social media (Boyd and Ellison 2008). The authors claimed that the uniqueness of social media is not that they provide a platform to meet strangers, but rather that they allow users to make connections that would not otherwise be made. Contacting of the hotel by tourists, as shown in the previous examples, has become easier and quicker in the social media age. Without this ease of communication, many prospective guests would have potentially given up trying to submit their query and consequently would most likely choose another accommodation provider to go to.

In addition, some respondents believed that the STEs created their Facebook pages in an effort to keep their audience informed about the business. They perceived Facebook as a tool for information sharing between businesses and customers, exactly as it functions between regular users, as stated by the following person when responding to the online questionnaire:

'People are using the Facebook page just to know what is happening in the hotel … it is like a billboard' (AP 2). This billboard comparison reflects how social media savvy the STE users and respondents are, being able to discern a business objective (strategy) – or the lack of it behind pages.

6.2.2 Competitions

Competitions conducted by the businesses played a significant part in attracting the respondents to their Facebook pages. Some respondents stated that they constantly seek or search for complimentary holiday offers on Facebook pages and hope to win a holiday at some stage. For instance, several users expressed their excitement on an STE's Facebook page saying *'Wow, a free night's accommodation in Merimbula, that would be awesome' and 'I've always wanted to go to Merimbula! It looks amazing from your posts!!'* (AP 5), as well as *'I'd really like to win it as soon as possible! Will be a late honeymoon seeing I'm not going on one'* (AP 7) in response to a post about a new competition conducted by the STE. The strong user interest in competitions fits with Drell's (2011) content suggestions for tourism brands on Facebook, where he suggests that hosting competitions has the propensity to excite users and generate useful content around the brand. Some users even mentioned in their responses that they followed the STE page to increase their chances of winning a prize at some stage. The expectations these users have of the STE page is, therefore, to see if the business conducts competitions from time to time that might allow them to win a vacation or holiday. As one user stated: *'I follow the page because they have exciting competitions and great prizes to win'* (AP 5) *and 'I constantly seek competitions for holidays and this page is running a competition for a holiday stay'* (AP 5). A person's interest in the STE and its offerings usually grows once they win a prize, as can be noted by their increased Facebook participation, thus making competitions a useful element in converting random users to potential customers. For instance, some users indicated that they began following the STE due to the competitions it had on its page, but then continued following the STE's Facebook presence because of the business updates: *'I followed the page because they had exciting competitions and great prizes to win … they also give me a lot of updates of what was happening in the township of Merimbula'* (AP 5). Arguably, this is a form of user loyalty that was initiated by the offering of competitions by the business on their Facebook page. In addition, competitions can contribute to strengthening connections between users, helping to establish a community of brand ambassadors to the STE. This can be noted when users

congratulate or thank other users after winning a prize (*'Thanks so much!!! Congrats to the other winners'* (AP 6) – in response to a winning notification posted by one of the STEs.

6.2.3 Communication

The majority of respondents indicated that one of the important reasons for becoming fans of the respective STE Facebook page was to stay in touch with the STE owners and staff. The main reason for them to follow the page was the positive visiting experience provided by their stay at the STE (*'I spent two weeks there last April'* AP 7*; 'Stayed there and loved it'* AP 6)*, in response to a question about their reason for following the page. Some respondents mentioned the private names of the owners and staff members as people they enjoy staying in touch with: (*'G'day Jason and AJ!'*) a user writes to the owners of AP 4, which suggests that they have been able to maintain a relatively good informal relationship with the business – potentially more so than was possible before the adoption of social media by the STEs and their guests. This development of a visitor-business relationship can be associated with the concept of social surveillance (Joinson 2008) that allows the user to locate old friends or colleagues and to learn about their progress in life. In this case, the users follow the progress of STE accommodation providers that they met on their holiday or during a social event. They treat these accommodation providers as close friends and the Facebook page assists with initially developing and subsequently maintaining this new friendship, which is something that was harder to achieve before the social media era. An example of this visitor-business Facebook friendship link is one user indicating: *'I liked this page just to see what they are up to at the hotel, they are very friendly people'* (AP 6). This friendship is also expressed by a series of 'thank you' posts and comments from past guests (*'Thanks for making me feel less homesick, y'all!'* AP 6*; 'Great Hotel and great owners – what's not to like? Best hotel in the Mount Gambier area'* AP 8).

Some users who spent vacation time at the accommodation provider before the social media era decided to utilise the new social media tools in order to re-connect with the business, as shown by this fan in his Facebook comment: *'All the best guys, 10 years, wow! I was there in '02 – wish I was there today'* (AP 6). This post suggests that Facebook can help in expanding the contact or marketing base of the STE significantly, to include guests well into the past. Other respondents also assumed that the main reason for STEs to create a page was to establish a channel for communication with guests and between guests. For instance, one respondent in the questionnaire indicated that *'They created the Facebook page for people to*

meet friends at the XXX' (the hotel's name, AP 2). Another comment, from the accommodation provider's page itself, was of a user trying to get to know another user after reading her profile *('Hi Amylee, You are single and I am single'* AP 2*)*. This user-to-user interaction tends to fit with comments of some STE owners who stated that they wish to offer a platform for communication between guests, especially young ones, via Facebook (see Chapter 5.5.1). Here the STE owners are willing to offer their page as an arena for discussions between travellers on issues that do not actually relate to the business itself.

6.2.4 Sales

Using the Facebook page as a business tool to increase revenue and promote the STEs was considered by many respondents as one of the leading reasons that these small businesses may have had a Facebook presence *('They built the page to get more business and bookings'* AP 2*; 'They have Facebook to get more attention and publicity and perhaps repeat visits to the hostel. It's a really smart idea'* AP 4*)*. For some respondents, the Facebook page was a primary channel used to enquire about potential bookings as if the page was a form of interactive travel expert. For instance, one traveller that commented on the Facebook page of one accommodation provider indicated: *'Hi there, I will be in Albany on Nov 11th. If I want to book a room for 3 persons, which room should I book? I read reviews on trip advisor on your place. It's very promising'* (AP 6), while another potential travel customer had a question regarding a special vacation and holiday package that was promoted on the Facebook page: *'What's the difference between the packages? Might be that I'm reading it wrong, but they seem the same ... other than the price?'* (AP 7). These types of questions have the potential to initiate a discussion between the traveller and the STE that may end with a reservation – a reservation that has direct links to users making enquiries through Facebook, and the STE responding to this enquiry through the same channel.

Users tended to recognise the importance of word of mouth marketing over push marketing (Walker 2001, Trusov, Bucklin et al. 2009) with quotes such as *'(The page was created to bring) exposure by word of mouth'* (AP 5), as stated by one respondent. In addition, some users associated with this accommodation provider identified how the page engages with them. This engagement encourages users to share content about the STE with their friends via their comments and likes and so more people will be exposed to the business and its services. *'Cheap at half the price ... Great deal, so come on down to Merimbula town'* – reflecting a fan responding to a post from the STE promoting a new accommodation deal (AP 5).

Several users also recognised the role that Facebook plays in the advertising world, one person indicating that they viewed the accommodation provider's Facebook presence as being *'Like a billboard'* (AP 2). This user relates the Facebook presence of the STE to that of a billboard analogy, which is one of the traditionally offline marketing platforms which can potentially lead to increased sales. Harris and Rae (2009) argue that the potential social media has for small enterprises with limited to no advertising budget lies in its relatively low operational cost, making it a good platform for marketing activities. The users understood the huge potential of using Facebook for advertising in terms of its ability to reach massive audiences, as explained by one respondent: *'Facebook is such a big network that is used by a lot of people of different ages, so it is a great way to get their (the STEs) word out there'* (AP 5). In other words, the respondents identified that the STEs are using the existing poll of users on Facebook in order to target them with tailored messages about the business.

In addition, some of the respondents claimed that it would be essential for a business today to have a Facebook page as this medium has become a norm in the digital age and people expect companies to have the Facebook social media platform – (*'Everyone is on Facebook these days ... Be there or be square!'* AP 8). This last comment indicates that there is an expectation from potential customers to be able to learn about different products and brands on Facebook in order to strengthen the purchase decision. The previous responses from users reveal a professional and deeper than expected understanding of social media marketing and perceived business benefits by the users of the STEs' Facebook sites.

6.2.5 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to Expectations from Social Media

The social media expectations associated with users that were fans of the STEs in this component of the study were grouped into four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Visitor Information, Competitions, Communication, and Sales. Figure 6.1 features the identified sub-themes under the Expectations construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 6.1 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Expectations construct

Visitor Information
- Educating users about the business and its offerings
- Allowing easier access to travel information due to the social media platform

Competitions
- Attracting new fans to the page
- Building a sense of a community
- Developing brand ambassadors

EXPECTATIONS

Communication
- Conveyance of positive visiting experience
- Maintaining closer relationship with the STE
- Expanding the customer base
- Staying in touch with other visitors

Sales
- The page is an e-commerce tool
- It serves as a platform for word of mouth marketing
- It is an advertising form

Based on the analysis of the user responses it is evident that users have different expectations of social media, as previously indicated in the academic literature (Lampe et al. 2010; Joinson 2008). Lampe et al. (2010) noted the user expectation of finding how meaningful the users are within their social network and Joinson (2008) discussed the social surveillance expectation as a leading one. This study revealed other user expectations. The participating users decided to become fans of accommodation providers for reasons that included being able to participate in competitions in order to win a free holiday, through to receiving updated information about the business. Across all users there was an expectation that the STE Facebook page should provide exactly what they are looking for, which varied from entertaining content to updated information about events and the region.

Seemingly, communication with the STE and between guests appeared to be the main user expectation from a Facebook page. Most users expressed their interest to stay in touch with the STE manager (or owner) and its staff members via the Facebook page in order to revive their positive vacationing or holiday memories. This desire to keep in touch with specific people working for a hotel is unique, as usually hotel guests do not communicate with the hotel and its staff after they have completed a holiday. With Facebook as a communication platform, the STEs and their past guests have formed online relationships that strengthened electronic word of mouth marketing and increased the chance for return visits.

Most users had a good understanding of the Facebook social media platform as a channel that would allow the STE to establish a presence in order to promote the business (virally) and to sell more accommodation rooms. The fans indicated that maintaining a brand page on Facebook was essential for the STE businesses if they wish to stay up to date with the technology and the market demands. This understanding should signal to the businesses that their audience is social media savvy and this should be reflected in the attention to detail and management of their Facebook page.

Whenever their expectations were fulfilled, users tended to respond to or share the specific post with their friends as a sign of their satisfaction. Their posted comments when this happened were lengthier and richer, indicating exactly how they perceive the STE and its Facebook page. The observation that a high number of user comments posted on the STE pages were short and, therefore, not able to be used for this thematic analysis stage of the study, provides a signal that some STEs may not understand the importance of fulfilling the online expectations of their Facebook fans.

6.3 Themes Identified Related to User Benefits of Social Media

Social media offers users different values and benefits in return for participating in online activities. Most users, when asked in the questionnaire or interviews, could not distinguish between the concepts of value and benefits when dealing with the accommodation provider's Facebook presence – hence these two themes were merged and covered under the title of Benefits of Social Media. The analysis of benefits associated with social media usage reported amongst users identified four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

1. **Entertainment:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as a source of online amusement and fun. Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) refer to content creation that is perceived as entertaining as an important element of social media presence potentially reflecting a hedonic benefit for the traveller.

2. **Knowledge Creation:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as a source of knowledge and information about the STE and its services. Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. (2010) propose that an important element determining the intentions to use social media for trip planning are functional benefits, such as learning about the destination and/or seeking answers for travel-related questions.

3. **Memories:** a sub-theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page in order to revive holiday memories and experiences. Fotis et al. (2012) suggest that people can use

social media to recall travel and vacation memories through the posting or sharing of images, texts, videos, and exchanges. **This sub-theme has overlaps with the previous visitor information grouping; however,** there are subtle and notable differences in the view of the researcher.

4. **Sharing:** a sub-theme that reflected use of the Facebook page as a social positioning platform in which the content items that travellers might share with friends contribute to telling a story about them. The building of online relationships with the commensurate exchange of user ideas as well as content has a sharing focus which Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. (2010) noted as addressing social interaction in the social media sphere.

6.3.1 Entertainment

Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) highlighted the importance of creating content that will entertain social media users, and that such content can potentially lead to the desired viral effect of online sharing. Most of the respondents found the examined STE pages to be entertaining, and stated it as one of the main benefits that they received from following the page. In particular, they mentioned the photos that were posted on the page and the competitions, which were seen as the most amusing part of their experience. For instance, one particular fan expressed his excitement at a baby photo the STE has posted: *'My first laugh of the day – Thank you'* (AP 6); while another user commented on enjoying the view of a photo of a kangaroo found near the STE: *'Lovely picture, lovely view, beautiful animal!'* (AP 4). Solis (2010) and Novak (2010) also stated that when the social media content is entertaining, users would share this content with their friends, which in turn will increase the electronic word of mouth around the brand (see also 6.3.4 Sharing). This was the case with the above users as well as with the following user who commented on a photo that depicted the graceful swimming of a whale that the page published: *'Oh, that is just a beautiful photo!'* (AP 5). The photo of the whale promotes the scenic environment in and around the STE region. Such a comment will potentially be seen by the Facebook friends of this user due to the viral mechanism of the channel that highlights friend activity in the personal news feed. This has the potential to increase the exposure of the STE to a greater number of social media users, allowing them to be known to a broader audience.

Entertaining content, such as posts containing a joke or a funny photo, was also found to initiate a dialogue between past guests and STE staff. For instance, a photo that an STE

published on their page of a new structure being built on their property led to a series of user comments, such as *'Is that a one direction promo shot?'* (AP 6). A staff member replied to one of them: *'Pssss Delia! You're going to get a flight back here once it's done so you can dance on the stage in your lederhosen!!'* (AP 6). In this example, the conversation exchange was initiated by the STE business and is portrayed in a positive light by the employee. It is a post that aims to be entertaining rather than a customer or sales pitch. The same can be said of the following example where the user responded to a photo of a yak that the STE has posted, asking fans to suggest a name that may suit the animal: *'The resemblance is undeniable. The mannerisms are identical. Fat Yak must be named EDWARD'* (AP 8). Edward is the name of a person working for the STE.

The STE responses in the case studies revealed that businesses attempt to constantly publish a diverse range of content material, from status updates on events, local news postings, uploading of guest photos and videos – all in order to provide an entertaining experience for their fans. This has resulted in users claiming that they would keep following the page even without planning a future visit, but rather for entertainment purposes. For instance, one respondent indicated … *'Yes (I would follow the page just for entertainment purposes) – it is interesting and funny and full of real people and animals'* (AP 1), whilst another respondent highlighted the entertainment aspect of the STE page as a pertinent reason for being a fan …*'Yeah, it's a great page, I will follow it just for entertainment'* (AP 8). Another respondent indicated … *'Yes, it is interesting and funny and full of real people and animals'* (AP 4). It can be assumed from these responses that the STEs were providing a hedonic benefit to their followers, which made them feel satisfied with their interaction with the STE's Facebook page. All respondents and people interviewed expressed satisfaction with the STE Facebook presence as a whole, and claimed that there is nothing they would change about it. When asked whether they found the pages to be fun and interesting to use, the typical responses were: *'Definitely! I like the constant updates on the page, the owners really do a great job in promoting the area and promoting their business in a non pushy way'* (AP 5) and *'Yes, the page is fun. I don't think you can make it any better'* (AP 8).

These responses demonstrate support for the business and its goals. Negative comments did not appear in any of the user postings across the investigated STEs; when there were objections, they were always presented as constructive criticism (for instance, requests to add more information about special dietary requirements), and almost never as expressions of dissatisfaction.

6.3.2 Knowledge Creation

The majority of users mentioned information and knowledge creation as a central benefit that they perceived in visiting the Facebook page of the business. This sub-theme might be argued as another information category reflecting the Facebook page's content that overlaps with the previous grouping that dealt with user expectations (visitor information provision). Although it would be convenient to group these together – there are some subtle but important differences between visitor information provision and what is termed here as knowledge creation. Under the visitor information theme, travellers when using Facebook pages expected that they would access practical information relating to issues associated with driving directions, menu items, weather, accommodation rates, and so on. This type of information is generated by a type of question/answer interaction between the initial Facebook page user request and the subsequent STE response. However, under the knowledge creation theme there is more focus on topics associated with the history, nature, flora, and fauna of the area, or even with regard to other regions. The generation or creation of new information or knowledge occurs through the process of the STE publishing content first (for example, the posting of a photo of a whale with information about its habits) that results in one or more users responding. It is these user responses to an STE post that improve the value of the original posting and arguably lead to knowledge creation for the others.

Users felt that various postings on the STE pages assisted them to broaden their knowledge about the local region through the process of being stimulated or intrigued by such postings. These postings may have been in the form of interesting photos that resulted in users asking questions of the STEs or other fans. For instance, one user asked '*How do you get to this spot*?' (AP 5), as a reaction to a scenic destination photo being published by the STE on their Facebook page, or '*Bloody hell, I thought Rob and I had done the Organ Pipes – no pun intended – so we have spent days on that beach, not realizing what was around the corner?*' (AP 7). This was a response to a photo the STE posted of a local nature attraction called the Organ Pipes in order to entice visitors to explore the area.

In addition, some users mentioned in their interview and questionnaire responses that the feedback they received was an important source of information on the page (that is, receiving answers from page owners for the users' questions and comments). For instance, a user asked on AP4's page '*Does that mean the whole loop from Halls Gap to Venus Baths to The Pinnacle is open?*' in response to a message the page had posted about a walking track being re-opened. This led to a dialogue with the STE manager/owner (AP 4) who replied '*No –*

unfortunately it is still closed from Venus Baths to the Pinnacle – but you can still get to the Pinnacle from Halls Gap.'

While a few responses were related directly to tourism and destination information (for instance, *'The page made me aware of whale watching opportunities in the area' AP 5*), many user comments expressed satisfaction associated with information about the STE's shows and other local events. Arguably, this might be related to the issue that 88% of the respondents across all the accommodation providers indicated that they were living in the same regional state where the STE was physically located – sometimes even in the same town. Therefore, their information interests and needs would be more focused on the events and recreational activities offered by the business.

Despite the original intentions of most STE owners in providing useful tourist information, as reported in the case studies, half of the respondents stated that they would not recommend that tourists rely solely on the hotel's Facebook page as a source for travel information about the region (for instance, *'Not really – it's just about life at the hostel' (and therefore not sufficient as a tourist guide) AP 4*). Interview respondents in general did not report the page as a substitute for a travel guide or the business's official website, but rather as an arena for past guests and visitors to stay in touch with the business and get updates about its services. One user stated that as a tourist she would search for other information sources: *'No (the page is insufficient as a tourist guide), I will probably look for more information on the internet ... I will need more information than what the page has. The Facebook page is helpful for tourists but not enough. I will use Google too' (AP 2).*

However, the other half of the respondents believed the page served as a relevant tourist guide and information source (for instance, *'I have learned a lot about the Merimbula area just by following this page, so it can function as a tourist guide' AP 5*). Various users mentioned that there was room for improvement if the aim of the Facebook page was to attract tourists. The main issues that were not addressed, according to these users, included photos of people enjoying themselves in different locations around the hotel, as well as information about the region and its attractions (*'The hotel should promote that it is near the Mount Shank volcano' AP 8*).

As explained earlier in this chapter, the majority of users said they would follow the page just for entertainment purposes (that is, even without planning to re-visit the hotel). The reasons mentioned were the interesting content and the atmosphere that the page managed to create

(*'I would definitely follow this page just for entertainment ... thanks to the great vibe received from it. It is a nice page that I do enjoy visiting, not just because they are running a competition'* AP 5, or *'Yes – it is interesting and funny and full of real people and animals'* AP 4). Therefore, and considering that most respondents were locals, it is clear that the pages functioned more as online entertainment providers rather than tourist guides.

6.3.3 Memories

Another commonly perceived benefit mentioned by users was that the accommodation provider's Facebook page was instrumental in bringing back positive holiday memories. Users claimed that the images published on the page were the main content element that revived these memories and took them back to their time at the specific STE (for instance, *'I miss this kitchen! I want to go back'* (in response to a photo of the communal kitchen in the STE (AP 6) or *'Wish I could sit there and enjoy watching it and go for a swim a bit to the left. Loved the spring'* (responding to a photo of a natural spring near the STE, AP 7).

Fotis et al. (2012) suggest that despite previous findings, social media is being used mainly after people have undertaken the holiday and returned home. This use of social media tends to be characterised by photo and video sharing, text posts and other activities to revive holiday memories. It was found that various users in this study were either quick to re-connect with the STE immediately after the visit (for instance, this user who wrote *'Thank you for a lovely escape! Looking forward to next time already!'* AP 7) or re-connected sometime after they had visited the region and had holidayed at the business (*'I did a 4 months motorbike trip around most of Australia and your hostel was the friendliest one I stayed in'* AP 6). Some users added a photo to support their textual greeting, like the user who wrote: *'We had a great time at your place, thanks a lot! Greetings to the chef!'* and added a photo of their tent that was pitched in the camping ground of the STE (AP 7). The Facebook page in these two STEs has a content generator function in that it allows users to create content to reflect their visits that are based on positive experiences and memories. User generated content is a basic characteristic of Web 2.0 (Anderson 2007) and past holidays of the STE's visitors are seemingly effective events on which to base content creation when it comes to STE pages on Facebook.

6.3.4 Sharing

The social benefit of sharing content items that were published by STE Facebook pages was identified by most users as a benefit of being a fan of a site. According to Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. (2010) various social media benefits included building online relationships and exchanging ideas and content. In this study, the majority of respondents confirmed that they shared photos and textual posts with others, and mainly the items they perceived as important or meaningful, such as competitions or humoristic material. The items that users chose to share assisted them to build the social identity of the STE page as well as their own presence. Some examples of this include sharing jokes in order to position a person as a comic or fun-loving person or someone that posted an unusual image to draw attention and comment to themselves. For example, 12 users shared a funny photo of a baby 'talking' on the phone that the STE had – obviously a photo that has nothing to do with the business and was only intended to entertain (AP 5). In addition, 13 users shared the following post from the STE, expressing their interest in competitions: *'112 to go til we reach 2000 (fans) ... getting closer each day ... can we draw the Whale Watching Package prize this week?'* (AP 5). And when AP 7 posted a photo of a beautiful river spot near the STE, five of the business' fans shared it with their friends in a relatively short period of time.

6.3.5 Summary of Themes Identified Relating to Benefits of Social Media

The benefits associated by users that were fans of the STEs in this component of the study were grouped into four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were: Entertainment, Information, Memories, and Sharing. Figure 6.2 features the identified sub-themes under the Benefits construct in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 6.2 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the Value and Benefits construct

Entertainment
- Users found the pages to be overall entertaining
- Entertaining posts increased word of mouth
- A positive discussion between the page and its fans
- The page tried to provide hedonic benefit by being entertaining

Memories
- Users felt encouraged to revive holiday memories from the STEs
- The pages functioned as content generators, attracting past guests from before the Facebook era

BENEFITS

Knowledge Creation
- The page manages to educate fans. It teaches them things they did not know before
- Main topic for knowledge creation: entertainment and night-life offerings
- Tourism promotion was not considered as the main function of the page

Sharing
- Most users shared content from the page with their friends, reflecting relationship forming benefit fulfilment

The respondents clearly highlighted several benefits that were also identified by Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. (2010) who proposed a model that explains the factors determining the intentions to use social media for planning a vacation trip. The hedonic, functional and social benefits were evident in the responses, although in this study they were perceived as benefits even after the vacation and not just for the planning phase.

Knowledge creation was found to be the major benefit for users, followed by entertainment. Even with the latter, the respondents indicated that they were more entertained by posts that were informative and relevant to them. In addition, they chose to share content items with their friends that they thought were informative and practical *('I would share something that interests me and that might interest someone else' AP 2).*

6.4 Overall Summary of Thematic Analysis of User Responses

The second research question that is directing this study asks what are the user perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented social media presence. The findings from the thematic analysis of user responses identified eight sub-themes under the two main categories of user expectations and benefits of social media. These sub-themes were: Visitor Information, Competitions, Communication, Sales, Entertainment, Memories, Sharing, and Knowledge Creation. Figure 6.3 features the identified sub-themes under the two analysis groups in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 6.3 Thematic map displaying identified sub-themes under the two analysis groups
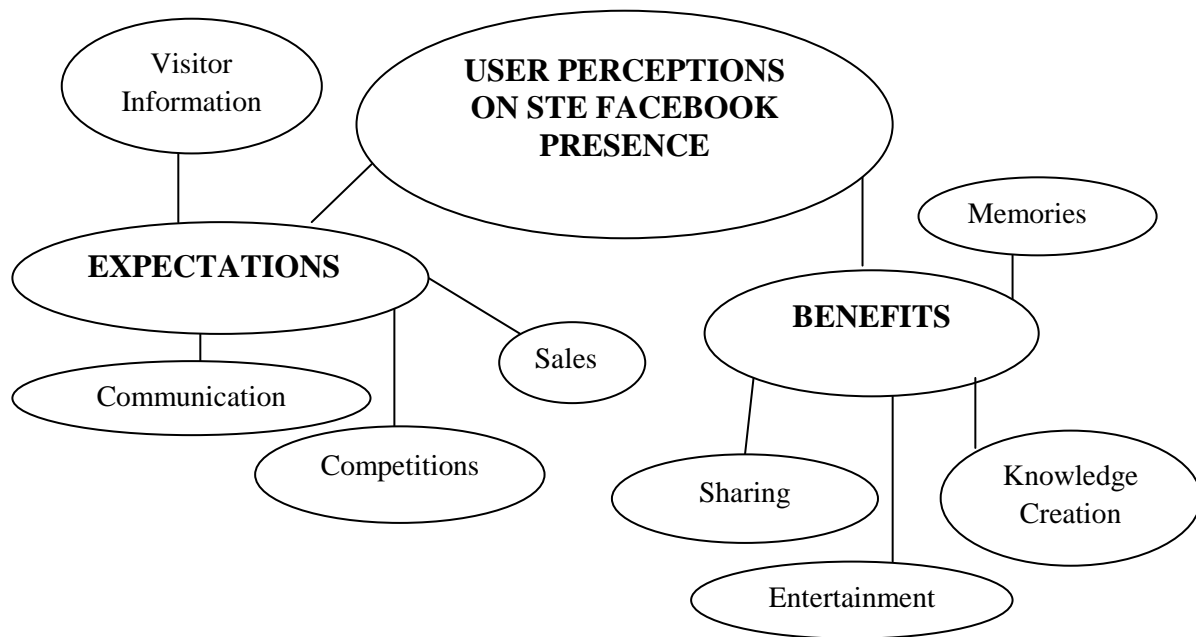
The analysis of user responses (questionnaires/interviews) revealed that the participants were social media savvy. Respondents were able to put forward various business reasons to explain why STEs might have created their presence on Facebook. They were able to indicate their expectations as users of the Facebook page and whether these expectations were fulfilled. Their understanding of the role that Facebook plays in the marketing mix was notable. This understanding might be related to their online usage habits, with the majority of users visiting Facebook several times a day. Arguably, their exposure to other types of business Facebook pages allowed them to make a relative comparison to the examined pages in this study. Not all users perceived the examined pages as tourism pages, or as pages that were created initially to promote the STE as a tourism business and a tourist destination. Instead, they assumed the pages were designed to entertain them and to allow easier communication with staff and past travellers of the STE. The users in this study were apparently more active and meaningful than the STE owners in determining the dynamics of the page – its content and atmosphere.

The next chapter will use the thematic analysis of both the STE (case studies) and the users (respondents/comments) data collection and discuss the connections between what STEs are doing on Facebook and the feedback given by their fans on the Facebook page. The findings will inform the proposal of an STE implementation model for social media usage.

CHAPTER 7: TOWARD AN IMPLEMENTATION MODEL FOR FACEBOOK ADOPTION BY AUSTRALIAN ACCOMMODATION STEs

7.1 Introduction

The first research question directing this study focused on how and why social media is being used by Australian accommodation STEs that are early adopters of the Facebook social media. The second research question of this study focused on users' perceptions of the Facebook page of these STEs that had implemented Facebook. The research design dealt with two phases: firstly, interviews were conducted with the participating STEs following an initial examination of their business background (online) as well as of their Facebook page.

The STEs were considered to be a set of early adopters being initially identified in mid-2010 as the first group of Australian accommodation providers that had established a social media presence using the Facebook platform. Rogers (2003) highlights the importance of early adopters when it comes to recent innovations or ideas in that they provide examples for others in their industry group and social domain with ways to use/emulate such new ideas. The data collected in this stage resulted in a series of case studies, out of which 18 sub-themes were identified through the use of thematic analysis. Secondly, users or fans of the STEs' Facebook pages were invited to provide feedback on the pages in an open-ended online questionnaire that was enabled through the cooperation of the STEs. Their direct responses, together with a thorough examination of user comments and posts over a twelve-month period on the participating STE Facebook pages, led to the identification of 8 sub-themes.

This section integrates the findings from the two data collection stages and re-visits the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2 as a starting point to formulating an implementation model of Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. An implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs is proposed later in the chapter. The chapter also discusses the findings in relation to the research questions.

7.2 Re-Visiting the Conceptual Framework

Following the Chapter 2 literature review, two conceptual areas emerged for directing the research. These areas were associated with user perceptions of social media, as well as the features that influenced adoption practices of Australian STEs in implementing social media.

The conceptual model area associated with user perceptions was found to be connected with the expectations that users have when dealing with social media and how they perceive factors such as functional and hedonic benefits (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. 2010). Several scholars suggested different reasons as to why users turn to social media, and propose reasons that vary from the 'evaluative social identity' (Lampe et al. 2010, p. 8) to perceived enjoyment (Kim et al. 2010). Therefore, user perceptions were included as an important part of the conceptual framework in this study. The study focused on Facebook due to its popularity in Australia compared with the other social networks (Sensis 2012). It was assumed that the diverse range of STE Facebook pages in this study would be perceived differently by users depending on an individual set of derived benefits and expectations.

Under the STE aspect of the conceptual model, adoption practices were considered across four different constructs. STEs tend to struggle with adopting new technologies and usually suffer from an absence of a managerial vision and a long-term strategy. Hence, the presence of these issues in the conceptual framework included a construct that represented the STEs' ability to have a business strategy when using Facebook (Beuker 2009, Owyang 2007, Stelzner 2010, Mayfield 2010, Wilson, Guinan et al. 2011; Hoffman & Fodor 2010); constructs related to taking into account factors such as the required resources for operating a Facebook page, including ICT skills and knowledge (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006; Evans 2010; Piggot 2011); and finally, a construct that embodied the STE business benefits of using Facebook (Axon 2010, McCarthy 2010, Buhalis 1998; Buhalis & Law 2008; Rogers 2003; Monday, Burgess et al. 2009, Montgomery & Chester 2009, Derham, Cragg et al. 2011; Langheinrich & Karjoth 2010).

Each of the above areas was argued as being important in influencing the implementation of Facebook presence by STEs. Figure 7.1 was first proposed in the literature review chapter and is re-presented to remind the reader of the initial conceptual framework that guided this research.

Figure 7.1 Proposed conceptual framework directing this study

User Perceptions	STE Adoption
Expectations from social media Value and benefits of social media	Strategy of social media usage (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004; Beuker 2009; Owyang 2007; Stelzner 2010; Mayfield 2010; Guinan et al. 2011; Hoffman & Fodor 2010) Resources to operate social media (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006; Evans 2010; Piggot 2011) ICT skills and knowledge (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006; Evans 2010; Piggot 2011)

Facebook Presence of STEs

Implementation of Facebook Adoption by STEs

The literature review discussed the benefits of using social media as a business and marketing tool, its requirements and potential business benefits. The motivations to use social media by different types of users were also discussed, highlighting the wide variety of reasons people have when using social media, and Facebook in particular. These two areas, as demonstrated in Figure 7.1, brought to light the current Facebook presence of Australian accommodation STES and how they were perceived by their fans on the social network. The different sub-themes that were identified following the two data collections in this study will be re-visited in light of the conceptual framework and will assist with formulation of an implementation model for Facebook usage by Australian accommodation STEs.

7.2.2 Re-Visiting the Conceptual Framework: Identified STE Case Study Sub-Themes
The conceptual framework proposed four adoption areas that were relevant and important with regard to STEs having a Facebook presence. The following are the sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of STEs' case studies.

7.2.2.1 Identified Sub-Themes Relating to the Strategy of Facebook Adoption

It has been noted that STEs usually adopt a product approach and ignore long-term sales goals (Bastakis, Buhalis et al. 2004). Several scholars highlighted the importance of having a clear social media strategy in order to utilise the marketing capabilities that it offers effectively, as well as to minimise the negative effects that it might have on the business (Guinan et al. 2011; Hoffman & Fodor 2010). The analysis of the case studies identified six different sub-themes that related to STE Facebook strategy:

*Motivation***:** This sub-theme reflected the STEs recognition of the value of implementing Facebook, as well as the different reasons as to why the business started to use Facebook. The researcher found that all STEs clearly understood how important Facebook was as a new communication platform for business development and marketing. The main motivation to choose Facebook as a marketing tool was reducing advertising costs. Most interviewees indicated that they prefer to develop a dialogue with the users rather than to adopt a 'hard sell' approach.

*Evaluation***:** This sub-theme reflected how STEs track and monitor their Facebook page in order to determine and learn about its performance (e.g. number of users, most popular posts) and about the demographics of the people using it in order to increase the engagement rates. The responses exposed a knowledge problem of analysing user data, which stops the STEs from thoroughly understanding the performance of their Facebook page.

*Content***:** This sub-theme reflected the development of the page based on the different types of content that were displayed and published. The responses revealed that all STEs were constantly trying to publish a diverse range of content types that focused and appealed to a broad range of people. A clear definition of the specific audience that their Facebook page was targeted at was an important finding, although not broadly practised even amongst early adopters.

*Challenges***:** This sub-theme captured the challenges of using Facebook in order to maximise the platform's potential. Not knowing whether Facebook had led to increased room bookings was found to be the most common issue in the case studies. This finding correlates with what other scholars said about STEs and their ICT-adoption obstacles, which leads to decisions based on intuition rather than clear

business information. The challenges tend to be associated with social media marketing where the businesses admit they need professional assistance in order to improve their online presence.

Multi-channel: This sub-theme reflected the notion of using other types of social media platforms within the business in addition to the main Facebook presence (for instance, Twitter, Google+ or LinkedIn). Several STEs incorporate other social networks into their online presence, these being Twitter and Google Plus. This finding exposes the conservative nature of the STEs who tend to be cautious with their marketing efforts by limiting the use of new platforms before fully utilising the capabilities of Facebook. It also highlights the nature of some early adopters that have utilised and experimented with more than one social media platform in order to explore the business value of these emerging communication modes.

Plans: This sub-theme reflects future plans that STEs have regarding their social media efforts, such as using new platforms (e.g. Pinterest) or enhancing their skills by attending professional workshops. Most STEs indicated they wanted to expand their social media presence by using other platforms such as Twitter, as well as to add new types of content.

7.2.2.2 Identified Sub-Themes Relating to Resources to Operate Social Media

STEs were found to be mostly family-run businesses with limited IT knowledge and insufficient access to resources, which made it difficult for them to adopt recent innovations. The analysis of STE resources to operate social media reported in the cases identified four important but distinct sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

Internet Connectivity: This sub-theme reflects the quality of internet speed where the STE was located. Most STEs reported that they enjoy a relatively good internet speed – even those STEs in remote areas did not find this a limitation. When slow connectivity was encountered, it was found that the STEs made a concerted effort to update their Facebook page. This indicates that having a fast internet connection is not compulsory for the ongoing maintenance of a Facebook business page.

Tools: This sub-theme reflects the use of third party software in order to make the Facebook page more interactive. A majority of the participant STEs indicated that

they were using third party applications (non-Facebook derived) in order to enrich their Facebook page and to make it more visually appealing. Those STEs who did not use external third party tools noted the importance of gaining professional training in order to operate and use such tools.

Budget: This sub-theme reflects the financial resources that STEs allocate specifically to using Facebook. Only one STE reported having a social media budget. The remaining STEs did not even consider the option of investing money on their Facebook presence, which tended to be perceived as a free platform that could be used for marketing. The lack of a dedicated social media budget is related to the lack of a clear social media strategy, as noted earlier.

Time: This sub-theme reflects the time devoted to working on the Facebook page. The limited time frame that most STEs have reported to devote to the maintenance of their Facebook page did not allow them to gain full control over it, protect their brand image and increase room bookings.

7.2.2.3 Identified Sub-Themes Relating to ICT Skills and Knowledge

Australian STEs, that comprise between 90–95% of all the tourism businesses in the country (Davidson, Burgess et al. 2006), tend to suffer from insufficient ICT knowledge, which makes it challenging for them to adopt new technologies. The issues associated with ICT skills and knowledge reported in the cases identified three different sub-themes that were relevant to Facebook adoption. These sub-themes were:

Confidence: This sub-theme reflects how confident the STEs were when using Facebook as a recent innovation. It was found that a good command of the Facebook platform allowed the STEs to be more creative with their page maintenance and to increase the engagement with its fans.

Assistance: This sub-theme reflects the areas associated with Facebook use that the STEs felt they needed assistance with due to insufficient knowledge. Most STEs were found to require additional training in computer technology/applications areas that were directly related to social media marketing, particularly video editing and photo editing.

*Website***:** This sub-theme reflects the maintenance of the official website of the STEs as another indication of the way they adopt ICTs and Facebook in particular. The researcher found that most STEs only performed elementary tasks on their websites such as adding text and left the rest of the work to a third party provider. This situation makes the development of their ICT-related skills slower and harder, as STEs rely on others to perform most of the web-related work. This finding correlates with their insufficient usage of Facebook's features, as described earlier.

7.2.2.4 Identified Sub-Themes Relating to the Benefits of Using Facebook

The benefits realised by STEs from using ICTs and social media in particular have been documented (Buhalis 1998; Schmallegger & Carson 2008; Derham, Cragg et al. 2011; Monday, Burgess et al. 2009). The analysis of social media benefits reported in the cases identified five different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

*Platform Characteristics***:** This sub-theme reflects Facebook's ease of use that made it convenient to operate without prior learning. Almost all STEs stated that one of the main benefits associated with using Facebook was that it does not require a steep learning curve, which was also a finding that Derham, Cragg et al. (2011) reported. However, it was found that the STEs were not fully utilising Facebook's tracking features (see also the strategy section of this chapter).

*Extra Customer Value***:** This sub-theme reflects the perceived special customer value that the Facebook page afforded users, who may be potential guests. The use of Facebook to provide relevant and current information about the property, as well as being able to use Facebook as a platform for reviving holiday memories, were pertinent in value adding for potential customers or previous clients.

*Social Media Reach***:** This sub-theme reflects how Facebook helps the STEs to access a larger audience, which results in providing a greater number of customer segmentation options. Global exposure is a Facebook benefit for STEs that was found to be very important. Some STEs also stated the cross-promotional activities they can conduct on Facebook by linking to other sites as a benefit (for instance, exchanging links with their page on Trip Advisor or their official website for greater exposure).

*Cost Savings***:** Facebook assisted STEs to reduce their advertising spend by allocating fewer funds to traditional media. STEs usually have small operational budgets, which

can explain why some participants mentioned Facebook's low maintenance cost as a significant and major business benefit.

***Knowledge Transfer*:** This sub-theme reflects knowledge transfer opportunities within the STE as a result of using their Facebook presence. Several of the participating STEs perceived Facebook-related knowledge transfer cases within the business itself and with the greater business community as benefits, for instance, an STE owner who consulted his young bartender when creating the Facebook page.

A total of eighteen sub-themes were formed under the four core areas related to STE adoption of social media. These sub-themes represent the ways that the participating STEs have used Facebook for business reasons, as well as their motivations for using the social network. Figure 7.2 reflects a reformulation of the STE adoption section of the conceptual framework to include the newly identified sub-themes.

Figure 7.2 Updated component of the conceptual framework that relates to STE adoption

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STE Adoption

Strategy of Social Media Usage
- Motivation – Facebook is a new platform that needs to be understood in order to be used as a marketing tool which promotes a conversation with users
- Evaluation – Facebook has to be measured and tracked in order to learn of its performance and to protect brand image
- Content – Composing a content plan to ensure that the Facebook page is interesting and meaningful for the users
- Challenges – Difficulties associated with Facebook usage
- Multi-channel – Considering using other social networks but Facebook for business needs
- Planning – Future plans the STE might have regarding its social media work

Resources to Operate Social Media
- Internet connectivity – The internet speed quality as an indicator to something that may affect Facebook usage
- Tools – Services, plugins or applications that the STEs are using in their Facebook work
- Budget – Funds available for social media work
- Time – The amount of time each STE is dedicating to update its Facebook page

ICT Skills and Knowledge to Operate Social Media
- Confidence – How confident STEs are in operating Facebook as early adopters
- Assistance – The areas in which STEs feel they need assistance regarding their Facebook-related work
- Website – The way STEs are handling their other web-related tasks, such as managing their official website, as an indicator to the way they may operate Facebook

Benefits of Using Facebook

- Platform characteristics – Facebook's ease of use that allows STEs to operate it without prior learning
- Extra customer value – The benefits users are realising from Facebook may result in potential bookings
- Social media reach – Getting to new markets, new audiences of potential guests
- Cost savings – Using Facebook as an alternative to the traditional and often expensive advertising platforms
- Knowledge transfer – Sharing ideas about Facebook usage between staff and industry colleagues

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The thematic analysis of the case studies identified important issues that address the first research question directing this study, that being – how and why is Facebook being used by Australian accommodation STEs that have implemented social media presence on Facebook? All STEs know why they use social media and recognise the business benefits that are associated with Facebook. This correlates with Roger's (2003) description of early adopters as people who search for new ways to improve their business. Their experimental freedom allowed the STEs to use applications made by third party providers to potentially increase user engagement with their Facebook presence. Some of them adopted ideas from the broader tourism community as well as used the social media knowledge of their younger staff members. However, these efforts were not accompanied with tracking and evaluating the page, which is crucial in order to learn how it is performing.

An important finding in examining STE adoption of Facebook was that they use the platform as an experiment in social media marketing without having a clear business strategy. The STEs do not invest enough time or money working on their social media presences. STEs admit that they need professional help in a wide range of topics related to social media but do not actively look for assistance.

7.2.3 Re-Visiting the Conceptual Framework: Identified User Perceptions of STE Social Media Presence

The conceptual framework proposed two areas that were argued as being relevant and important when examining a fan's perceptions with regard to a business having a Facebook presence. The following are the sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of user responses and comments.

7.2.3.1 Identified Sub-Themes Relating to User Expectations of Social Media

Users tend to approach social media with different goals in mind, as well as perceive the phenomenon that is social media differently (Lampe et al. 2010; Joinson 2008). The analysis of STE fan interview and questionnaire responses, as well as comment postings, identified four sub-themes that were associated with users' expectations from an STE Facebook presence. The sub-themes were:

> ***Visitor Information*:** This sub-theme was found to reflect the content that was published by the page administrators, both textual and visual, in order to support the promotion efforts of the STEs. Visitor information was mentioned by half of the

respondents as the main reason for them to become fans of the STE's Facebook page. All respondents were either past guests or clients of the STE, with their ongoing interest in the business demonstrating the potential that social media has in maintaining continuous relationships between businesses and customers.

Competitions: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of competitions as a central engagement method by page administrators. Some respondents claimed that they only follow pages on Facebook when there was an opportunity to participate in competitions to win prizes. The offering of this type of content is an important finding behaviour that fits with recent work by Drell (2011). The findings in this study reinforce the high relevance and practicality for tourism businesses on Facebook to host competitions in order to engage with fans and generate useful word of mouth about their tourism business and brand.

Communication: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of the Facebook page as a communication platform between the STE and its guests/clients, as well as between guests themselves. The positive visiting experience was a strong driver for many users to become fans of the STE Facebook page in order to keep in touch with the hosts. This finding highlights the use of Facebook as being associated with the concept of social surveillance, which allows users to locate friends from the past and to learn about their progress in life. Some users who visited the STE in the pre-Facebook era decided to re-connect with the business thanks to the social network abilities.

Sales: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of the Facebook page as an e-commerce channel for the STE in order to increase room bookings and also profits from food and beverage sales. Some fans enquired about potential bookings as if the Facebook page was a form of interactive travel expert. Fan responses indicated that they recognised the role that Facebook plays in the advertising world and that it was an important and necessary tool for the STEs.

7.2.3.2 Identified Sub-Themes Related to User Benefits of Social Media

Users enjoy different benefits in exchange for participating in the social media sphere (Parra-López, Bulchand-Gidumal et al. 2010; Fotis et al. 2012). The analysis of fan responses, as

well as comment postings, allowed the benefits of using the STE's Facebook page to be identified and grouped into four different sub-themes. These sub-themes were:

Entertainment: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of the Facebook page as a source for online amusement, which was argued to fall under the realm of being a hedonic benefit for the traveller. The examined STE pages were found to be entertaining by most users, who positioned 'entertainment' as one of the leading benefits that they received from following a particular page. Posting a joke or a funny photo also initiated a dialogue between past guests and STE staff. This resulted in users claiming that they would keep following the page even without planning a future visit or vacation to the STE. Despite the original intention of the STEs, the Facebook pages were not perceived as sources for travel and tourism information per se by all users, but rather as entertainment sources.

Knowledge Creation: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of the Facebook page as a source of knowledge and information about the STE and its services and provide what was deemed functional benefits. This was arguably the most important user-perceived benefit identified, as users felt that various postings on the Facebook pages helped them to expand their knowledge about the local area through the process of being intrigued by such postings, leading them to investigate and explore further aspects of the business.

Memories: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of Facebook to revive holiday memories and experiences. Users clearly stated that the photos on Facebook were the main content type that took them back to their time at the specific hotel visited. Memories also led to positive word of mouth and content creation by fans that reflect important promotional value for the business.

Sharing: This sub-theme was found to reflect the use of the Facebook page as a social positioning platform, or a social benefit. In this study, most users confirmed that they had shared content items they perceived as important or meaningful with their friends, such as jokes, information or competitions that were promoted by the STE.

The findings associated with user perceptions of STE Facebook adoption provide important insights into the second research question directing this study, which relates to what are the user perceptions on the examined Facebook presences of Australian accommodation STEs?

A total of eight sub-themes were formed under the two core areas related to user perceptions of social media. Figure 7.3 reflects a reformulation of the User perceptions section of the conceptual framework to include the newly identified sub-themes.

Figure 7.3 Updated conceptual framework component that relates to user perceptions

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User Perceptions

User Expectations from Social Media
- Visitor information – Textual or visual content that was posted on Facebook by the STE to promote its offerings
- Competitions – Conducting competitions on Facebook as a way to engage with fans
- Communication – Using Facebook as a communication tool between guests and the STE
- Sales – Using Facebook as an e-commerce channel to sell products by the STE, from rooms to food and beverage

User Benefits of Social Media
- Entertainment – Facebook as a source for online amusement given by jokes, competitions and photos
- Knowledge creation – Using the page to learn more about the STE or the region where it is located
- Memories – Using Facebook to revive holiday memories
- Sharing – Using Facebook for social positioning by sharing items from the STE page with their Facebook friends

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7.3 Reflecting on the Facebook Presence of STEs: User-Business Interplay

The investigation of STE adoption of Facebook, as well as user perceptions of the STE Facebook practices, can be viewed as a direct reflection of the current Facebook presence of a set of early adopting Australian accommodation STEs. This section integrates the findings from the two data collections to portray a reflective picture of the current Facebook presence of this group of STEs. By a process of comparing and contrasting the data collected, the researcher identified the following themes that include: recognising the importance of social media, social media skills and experiences, and perceptions on the function of the Facebook presence.

7.3.1 Recognising the Importance of Social Media

Both STEs and users understand how important Facebook is to the marketing efforts of businesses in the digital age. Their responses revealed a strong recognition of the potential of social media to reach large audiences of potential consumers and promote brands from various industries, including tourism.

All STEs know exactly why they use Facebook for business purposes, with reasons varying from giving users a communication platform that may increase the global exposure of the STE, to using a more affordable tool for advertising. One reason for using Facebook that was shared by all STEs is the understanding of its centrality in today's world. They all see the

importance that Facebook has as a platform for business development and marketing, and recognise the overall transition from push marketing towards a conversation mode, which they are happy to adopt. Being able to communicate directly with potential guests allows STEs to spend less on advertising and to enjoy more direct bookings that do not involve third party agents.

The users' understanding of the role that Facebook plays in allowing businesses to engage with them was notable as well. They had an expectation that businesses needed to maintain a page on Facebook and thought it was an elementary requirement. Using the Facebook page as a business platform in order to increase room bookings and to advertise the STEs was considered by many users as one of the main reasons that small businesses may have created a Facebook presence.

This mutual understanding on the importance of social media further supports the proposing of an implementation model which will be able to assist STEs with better serving their followers on Facebook and which can be potentially extended to other social media modes.

7.3.2 Social Media Skills and Experience

Differences between STEs and users were identified with regard to their social media skills and experience. The analysis revealed that most of the users were social media savvy based on their ability to explain various business reasons for which they believed the STEs might have developed a Facebook presence, as well as their detailed and clear expression of their expectations from using Facebook. This level of confidence in using Facebook is arguably related to the users' online usage habits, with the majority of them visiting Facebook several times a day.

In contrast, only three STEs stated that Facebook is an easy platform for them to use. All other STEs felt that they needed additional training to improve their social media marketing skills. The most sought-after areas for training were video editing (accommodation provider 1) and photo editing (accommodation providers 3 and 8), as well as areas that relate closely to digital strategy and development (for instance, how to better integrate Facebook with the official website of the STE for a greater marketing effect). In addition, the time STEs invest in managing their Facebook presences was found to be minimal (the page being checked once a week, and in some cases, even once in every fortnight). This time frame is insufficient should page administrators want to respond to user questions and comments quickly and

effectively, considering that most users indicated that they use Facebook daily. The mismatch between STEs Facebook adoption practices, and what users actually do, has the potential to lead to engagement problems and a reduced positive experience for fans.

These skill and experience differences put the STEs in an awkward position as page administrators since their followers on Facebook seem to be more social media savvy than they are. This unique situation, where the consumer is more confident than the business in the communication space, is unlikely to happen in traditional media due to its nature as a one-way communication system. In Facebook, however, the two-way communication platform allows random users who are not necessarily journalists or marketers to join the conversation and to take an active part in influencing the perceptions of a brand or business. The page analysis of user contributions on Facebook and also their survey responses suggest that it is the users who are more in control of the page and its dynamics than the administrators. The business owners did not have a clear social media strategy, nor could they define their target audience and tended to use Facebook more like an experiment. In contrast, their fans on Facebook knew exactly why they were using Facebook and what their expectations were from the STE pages they were following. In some pages the researcher found more user contributions (that is, posts and comments) than STE contributions. This clearly indicates that users were more active than STEs in developing the Facebook presence of the STE, and raises questions regarding online reputation and brand image.

User responses revealed a strong support of the businesses and an understanding of their goals. The user appreciation of the STEs was almost unconditional and engaging, with no negative comments being made on the pages. This is obviously an important achievement of the STEs, being able to build strong communities of brand ambassadors that would generate positive word of mouth about their business. On the other hand, with the users almost fully in control of the dynamics of the page, STEs might find it difficult to deal with situations of undesired conversations or posts that would be damaging to their brand, business and image. In addition, STEs would find it challenging to change the marketing objectives of the page according to the business' needs (for instance, if they need to put more emphasis on travel information for a while rather than on competitions). Users might resist these changes by ignoring the page or commenting negatively about them. Arguably, a good practice will be to achieve a balance between controlling the page as an owner while fulfilling user needs by tracking their user behaviour and responding to their requests.

The users' high exposure to Facebook and to other business presences in the social network poses another challenge when considering the limited funds STEs are investing in their pages. Only one STE owner indicated he had an organised social media budget, while the remaining STEs did not even consider the option of investing money in their Facebook presence, which they view as a free-to-use platform. Having no funds to spend on social media may effect the quality of the Facebook presence in the long run, as attending workshops to improve social media skills or promoting posts via Facebook Ads are both paid activities. If STEs wish to match user expectations and to compete successfully on Facebook with other tourism brands their users might follow, then they need to consider having a dedicated social media budget.

7.3.3 Perceptions on the Function of the Facebook Presence

There was inconsistency in the way STEs and users perceived the function of having a Facebook presence. Despite the original intentions of most STE owners in using Facebook to promote tourism by providing useful tourist information, only half of the users believed the page was relevant for tourists planning to visit the region. The other half thought it was better as a source of entertainment, updates and communication. In addition, these users said they would not recommend tourists to rely solely on the STEs' Facebook page as a source for travel information about the region.

This assumption contradicts what most STE owners think of their page. While they did explain in the case studies that their main motivation to create the page was to offer users a communication platform, their goal was to increase room revenue. They stated that they use Facebook as an alternative advertising platform and the product advertised is, of course, a tourism product (that is, hotel rooms and/or services).

The interpretation of user responses and comments allows a reasonable conclusion that some page owners were not clear enough about their marketing intentions behind establishing the page, potentially explaining the lack of a strategy as reported in the cases. While the published content was diverse, it was not always focused around the tourism aspects of the business. In addition, only one STE was able to define the target audience of the page, while others were aiming at a broad audience. This could be one of the reasons why pages may have looked less as tourism-related pages and more as generic pages for entertainment purposes.

The lack of page tracking by STEs, as reported in the cases, potentially led to page administrators not knowing how their pages were perceived by their fans. There is clearly a knowledge problem of analysing user data, which does not allow the STEs to thoroughly understand their page and its performance. Had they monitored the pages more closely as a useful way to measure Facebook's contribution to room bookings, STEs might have learned more about some of the functionality as perceived by users, and could have altered it so that it better serves the business and its goals.

Another important finding was the number of relevant user comments and posts that were analysed by the researcher during the second data collection (the user analysis). As explained earlier, only comments and posts that were meaningful to the discussion and rich in data were chosen, leaving behind many single-worded contributions and/or text that was not focused or developed enough to be meaningful to the study. Overall, 76 user comment contributions were chosen – a small number considering that the examination covered all user comments and posts of all 8 STEs during a period of 12 months. While some STEs enjoyed a dynamic discussion with users, others suffered from medium to low engagement rates. This may be related to the weak involvement in managing the page by some STEs.

On reflecting on STE adoption and the perceptions of their Facebook fans, some interesting findings regarding the usage and consumption of the Facebook platform were found. The three main areas that were identified and discussed in this section were the shared agreement on the centrality of social media and its contribution to the business world; the knowledge and skill gap issues between STEs and users in the social media space, which led to the Facebook pages being controlled more by the users than by its administrators; and finally, the different perceptions on the main function of the Facebook pages. Figure 7.4 reflects a reformulation of the Facebook presence section of the conceptual framework to include the newly identified sub-themes. The last two areas are directly connected to the lack of a clear social media strategy, one that includes an effective tracking mechanism as well as a dedicated budget. Without a strategy, STEs seem to gradually lose control over the pages, and enjoying the benefits of using Facebook is an ad hoc way for experimentation in which results are uncertain. While it may be beneficial in the early stages of the adoption, as reported in some of the cases, it might also prevent STEs from fulfilling their business objectives and even damage their brand image in the long run.

Figure 7.4 Updated conceptual framework for implementation of Facebook adoption by STEs

User Perceptions

User Expectations from Social Media
- Visitor information
- Competitions
- Communication
- Sales

User benefits of social media
- Entertainment
- Knowledge creation
- Memories
- Sharing

STE Adoption

Strategy of Social Media Usage
- Motivation
- Evaluation
- Content
- Challenges
- Multi-channel
- Planning

Resources to Operate Social Media
- Internet connectivity
- Tools
- Budget
- Time

ICT Skills and Knowledge to Operate Social Media
- Confidence
- Assistance
- Website

Benefits of Using Facebook
- Platform characteristics
- Extra customer value
- Social media reach
- Cost savings
- Knowledge transfer

Facebook Presence of STEs

Recognising the Importance of Social Media
- The mutual understanding of both users and STEs of the role Facebook plays in the business world

Social Media Skills and Experience
- STEs claimed they need assistance
- They didn't fully utilise Facebook's capabilities
- They invested little time on Facebook
- Users were Facebook savvy due to longer exposure to other pages
- Some users visited the site every day

The Function of the Facebook Presence
- STEs hoped it would be a tourism page
- Users tend to associate the page with entertainment

Implementation of Facebook Adoption by STEs

The next section will present an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs with associated recommendations.

7.4 An Implementation Model for Facebook Adoption by Australian Accommodation STEs

The findings associated with STE Facebook adoption, as well as users' perceptions of the STEs' social media presence, allows the researcher to propose an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. A model in science represents systems in our surroundings through words, photos and actions (Gilbert 1991). According to the author, science can be defined as a process in which researchers build predictive conceptual models. In this study, an implementation model is proposed as a set of components aimed at improving the process of adopting an innovation (Facebook in this instance), or re-visiting a previous adoption of that innovation in order to improve business performance. The suggested model was formulated based on the Facebook adoption of the early adopting STEs, their unique needs as expressed by them, and the perceptions of the users that are their registered fans. Early adopters were chosen as they can demonstrate the diffusion of a recent innovation, such as social media by an industry group (Rogers 2003). The main goal behind developing the model was to try to encourage non-or-late adopters of social media to consider using Facebook as a business tool or to improve their current Facebook presence. This model can be viewed as an enabler to assist accommodation STEs creating and/or maintaining a Facebook presence that fulfils their social media goals and contributes to the overall commercial success of the business through an improved dialogue with their customers.

In general, the model contains two anchors: the first relates to strategy, which can be premised on having *measurable goals*; by knowing the *target audience* of the page; and by having a clear *content plan*. The second anchor relates to the availability of STE resources and skills, which include social media-related *training* for the STE; *time* invested in maintaining the Facebook presence; and the *budget* available for Facebook management. Each anchor directly affects and interacts with the other: the strategy has the potential to change the current resources and skills available for the STE, while in other cases, those resources and skills will determine how the strategy will look. Another component of the model relates to being able to measure STE social media success using some of the commonly available metrics that address the dynamic nature of having a Facebook page.

The graphic representation of the model will follow the description of the main practical components of the model, which are to develop a Facebook social media strategy, allocate resources and improve ICT skills, and finally measure and change the Facebook presence and its performance as an ongoing process.

7.4.1 Developing a Facebook Strategy

The analysis of eight case studies of Australian accommodation STEs has shown that while all STEs were aware of the strong influence that Facebook had in the business world, they tended to use it without having a well thought out strategy for accomplishing long-term business objectives. They maintained a Facebook page mainly because it allowed them to spread their marketing messages without spending large sums of money on other modes of advertising. The STEs in most cases succeeded in developing an authentic dialogue with their fans, which was centred on topics other than direct accommodation bookings (for instance, happenings in the area and news regarding staff). They indicated they knew which types of content their fans prefer, but could not define their target audience and did not measure the performance of the page using analytic tools. Wilson, Guinan et al. (2011) and Hoffman and Fodor (2010) suggest that businesses have to develop clear social media strategies before launching their online presence. Therefore, the first step towards the implementation of an STE presence on Facebook should be the development of a clear social media strategy, which will include measurable business goals; a thorough understanding of the target audience; and a detailed content plan tailored around fan preferences and STE needs.

7.4.1.1 Measurable Goals

Measurable business goals have to be set by the STEs in order to define their social media efforts and to allow them to track their performance and improve it when necessary. These goals should reflect several areas related to the business and its growth potential. The business needs of the STE from a bookings point of view would use Facebook as an important communication mode, for instance, the Facebook page as a source for direct bookings used in tandem with the STE website allowing the business to leverage these two online activities. Measures of bookings from each online presence can be subsequently analysed for success. Facebook can be used by the STE to promote their brand image by creating discussions each month about topics related to the brand. The creation of a minimum number of discussions and the subsequent responses generated can be a gauge of success. The attraction of new fans (fan growth) over a period allows the STEs to gain immediate and

direct feedback on the success of their Facebook presence. Setting up business goals and working towards achieving them will reduce the experimental element from the STEs' social media work, and replace it with a long-term, strategic thinking. This will allow STEs to gain greater control over the page and its dynamics currently claimed by their social media savvy fans as discussed in the previous section.

7.4.1.2 Audience

STEs need to be able to define their target audience on Facebook so that they are able to specifically direct a content plan that will match their preferences and interests. This can be done by tracking page demographics using Facebook Insights, which discloses several important factors, such as the division between male and female, age groups and geographic locations of the fans (to the city level). In addition, STE page administrators can also check the public profiles of their fans to learn about their hobbies and brand preferences through other pages that they have 'liked'. Knowing what other tourism brands in particular are of an interest to the fans may assist STEs in developing and posting relevant content. It also assists in identifying the opinion leaders among their fans, who are usually the users with the greatest number of Facebook friends, discussions, postings and interactions. These opinion leaders may help the STEs in promoting their marketing messages more effectively due to their popularity online.

7.4.1.3 Content Plan

Lastly, a periodical (for instance, weekly/monthly) content plan should be developed in order to verify that posts will be published on time (depending on the needs of the STE), as well as to make sure that all marketing goals are covered. Some STEs indicated that coming up with fresh content ideas for Facebook was their most challenging social media task. Therefore, investing efforts in a routine (rather than sporadic) development of a content plan may simplify this task. STEs can be more active and creative when composing the content plan by reviewing what their competitors are doing on Facebook content-wise; searching for third party content to share (for instance, relevant articles about tourism in the region); and identifying which of their posts were the most engaging in order to optimise the next plan. A content plan will also ensure that more fans will consider the page as travel-related, and not just as an entertainment source as found in the study. If highlighting the tourism values of the region is part of the STE's goals, then it should be reflected in the content plan.

An important element related to content is the ongoing feedback on fans' comments and questions. As discussed in the literature review, the 'feedback' good practices cover the steady dialogue between the business and its fans on social media (Brogan 2007; Headshift 2009; Novak 2010). The content plan will naturally attract reactions from fans that have to be addressed by the page administrators to encourage participation and to protect the brand image of the STE.

7.4.2 Resources and ICT Skills

The case studies revealed several resource issues that affected the Facebook performance of the STEs. In particular, time invested in maintaining Facebook was found to be minimal, and no social media budget was set by the STEs. At the same time, problems associated with the ICT skills of the STEs were identified, after most page administrators admitted they need professional training related to social media development and maintenance. Therefore, STEs need to review their current available resources to be able to maintain a Facebook presence. This will allow them to enrich their social media activity through better usage of Facebook. In addition, STEs have to be more active in seeking the professional help they need.

7.4.2.1 Training

The analysis revealed that most of the users were social media savvy due to their understanding of social media from a business point of view, as well as continuous exposure to other brands that use Facebook. In order to avoid enlarging the social media gap between STEs and their fans, STEs have to put more emphasis on professional training. This training can be done via participation in social media workshops or reading posts about social media in professional blogs for marketers. Even those page administrators who felt comfortable with Facebook still indicated they should keep developing their social media skills as demonstrated in the case studies. Some of the skills that STEs claimed they want to develop were video editing, writing for the web and how to monetise Facebook. Facebook is ever changing and so are user preferences, hence the importance of continuing education and training. However, it is important to note that most of the participating STEs indicated that they are either in the process of learning about social media via professional workshops or wanting to attend such workshops if an opportunity arises. This shows that even the STEs themselves are aware of the need to learn more about Facebook and its features in order to improve their social media presence.

7.4.2.2 Time

The study found that most STEs had a limited amount of time to devote to the maintenance of their Facebook page. Indeed, they spent less time attending to their Facebook presence than the time spent on Facebook by their fans that visit the site sometimes more than once a day. To gain back some of the control over the page, which includes promoting the business and its unique needs, as well as protecting its brand identity from possible damage that might occur, STEs should invest more time in maintaining, measuring and developing their Facebook presence. The time requirement directly relates to tasks needing to be addressed, which will be different for each business. Time should be allocated to make sure that no questions are left unanswered and all user comments get an official response. In some cases, an even tighter control has to be achieved by visiting the page several times a day – especially following cases of negative comments about the STE and/or a quick fan growth that will most likely lead to more discussions. Once STEs develop their social media skills and learn how to better utilise Facebook's different features, they will understand that more time has to be invested in maintaining their Facebook page.

7.4.2.3 Budget

Users who follow the STE pages on Facebook were also found to be fans of more prominent tourism brands (including large hotel chains with much bigger marketing budgets). Therefore, it is clear they were exposed to more sophisticated Facebook presences that were created by social media professionals. In order to try to minimise the inevitable user experience gap between the STE pages and other tourism pages on Facebook that might enjoy more resources, STEs will have to allocate some funds to their social media marketing. The case studies identified that very little money was invested in maintaining a Facebook presence, which fits with the experimental phase of the STEs as early adopters. Should STEs wish to grow their Facebook presence and to optimise it, they should stop perceiving Facebook as a free platform. While it is more affordable than traditional media, Facebook does charge money for running campaigns using Facebook Ads or for promoting specific posts. In addition, funds should be allocated for social media training and development, as mentioned earlier in this section. The exact amount should be determined by several factors, such as the size of the STE, the number of fans it has on its Facebook page, as well as the STE's unique business goals. Setting up a dedicated budget for social media activities will

strengthen the STEs' commitment to their social media efforts, which will most likely improve their online performance.

7.4.3 Measure and Change

A Facebook presence has to be measured continuously and adjusted according to the dynamic online environment. This issue did not appear to be highly regarded by most STEs in this study, leaving STE owners with unanswered questions regarding the contribution of the page to their online accommodation bookings. Ongoing measurement of the page based on the business goals that were set earlier allows for page optimisation and, arguably, will be more consequential in improving the fan experience.

There are different tools available to STEs to measure the performance of their page. The most basic ones include using Facebook Insights, which can allow STEs to learn about the viral reaction to the published posts, fan demographics and page growth; Ads Manager can allow STEs to be informed about the performance of their ads, number of impressions, number of clicks and billing information; and reading all user contributions, including all posts and comments left on the page. Some STEs in the study did implement the latter and read what users have posted to the page almost daily, as indicated in the case studies.

The measure and change aspect of the implementation model will arguably influence its two main anchors (Facebook strategy and resources and skills) in what can be described as a feedback mechanism. For example, if the page attracts a low number of user comments (as discovered after measuring it), the page administrator can revise the content plan. By doing that, he/she may need to get some professional training to improve their writing skills, for instance. In other words, the measurement findings provided feedback that encouraged the page administrator to alter their strategy and/or resources and skills. These alterations would then lead to a revision of the Facebook presence.

Figure 7.5 depicts the model's graphic representation, which includes the two main anchors (Facebook strategy and resources and skills). Measure and change influences the two anchorscontinuously to improve the STE Facebook presence.

Figure 7.5 An implementation model for Facebook adoption by accommodation STEs

Facebook Strategy

Measurable Goals	**Audience**	**Content Plan**
• Direct bookings • Create discussions • Fan growth	• Define audience • Fan preferences • Fan interests • Opinion leaders	• Source for fresh content • Review competitors • Travel content

STE FACEBOOK PRESENCE

Measure and Change

Training	**Time**	**Budget**
• Users are social media savvy • Attend workshops • Read blog posts	• More time means stronger control • Users are on Facebook daily	• Facebook is not a free tool • Invest in ads and training

Resources and Skills

7.5 Summary

This chapter re-visited the conceptual framework directing this study, as well as the 26 sub-themes that were found after the two data collection processes, involving both STEs and their fans on Facebook. These sub-themes were incorporated into the initial conceptual framework providing important insights for each of the framework's components. The updating of the framework laid the foundations for proposing an implementation model for Facebook adoption as suggested in the latter part of the chapter. Social media strategy, resources and skills were proposed as anchors for the implementation model, each being important in the overall social media presence. The model also included measuring and adjusting components that provided an iterative feedback loop for STEs on their Facebook presence.

The next chapter will summarise the findings of this research and highlight its contribution to knowledge, as well the study's limitations, implications and future research.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study documented the Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs in order to understand how and why the social media platform can be used for business purposes. Also captured in the study were user perceptions regarding their expectations associated with using the STE's Facebook page to better understand the adoption of what was argued as being a recent ICT innovation. The undertaking this study addressed was the limited understanding with regard to the adoption of Facebook by STEs in light of the growing popularity of social network platforms that have commenced being used throughout the industry. The findings have led to the development of an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs that potentially allows non-adopters to examine the benefits of using the social network to achieve their business goals, as well as assist late-adopters with re-evaluating their Facebook implementation and its effectiveness.

This chapter summarises the research findings before discussing how the study contributed to the existing academic knowledge in the fields of social media and STEs, as well as its contribution to the industry. It presents the limitations of the research and proposes directions for future studies in the area.

8.2 Findings

The first research question directing this study explores how and why social media was being used by Australian accommodation STEs that had implemented social media presence on Facebook. The analysis of case studies identified eighteen sub-themes, which were: motivation; evaluation; content; plans; challenges; multi-channel; internet connectivity; tools; budget; time; confidence, assistance; website; platform characteristics; extra customer value; social media reach; savings; and knowledge transfer.

It was found that the participating STEs use Facebook as an experiment in social media marketing. STEs heavily relied on intuition to determine the progress of their Facebook page and did not track the use of the social media platform properly using some of the available monitoring tools such as Facebook Insights. This experimental situation allowed them to freely engage and be effective in the way they communicated with their fans and users, but at the same time, prevented them from clearly determining if their social media presence generated additional room bookings. The limited time and resources that STEs allocated to

their Facebook maintenance also supported the notion that they were experimenting with the channel, rather than it being a pre-defined project, which tends to be a common characteristic of early adopters. STEs admitted that they need guidance with several areas related to social media marketing, but did not actively search for solutions. All STEs acknowledged the importance of having a social media presence, recognising the business benefits of using Facebook with reasons varying from providing the users with a communication platform that may increase the global exposure of the business, to reducing advertising costs.

The second research question that directed this study investigated what were the user or fan perceptions of Australian accommodation STEs that had implemented social media presence. Eight sub-themes were identified under the two main categories of user expectations and user benefits. These sub-themes were: visitor information; competitions; communication; sales; entertainment; memories; sharing; and knowledge creation.

The users or fans of the STEs were found to be social media savvy and were able to explain various business reasons as to why STEs might have created their presence on Facebook. Their expectations as users from the Facebook page were clear and they understood the role that Facebook has in the marketing mix of businesses and brands. Arguably, the users' exposure to other types of business Facebook pages enabled the comparison to the examined STE pages. Despite the STEs' original intention of using the Facebook platform to promote the business as a tourism entity, and their location as a tourist destination, not all users perceived that the pages were created for this purpose.

The users in this study were more active and meaningful than the STE owners in determining the dynamics of the page by contributing content. This, together with the contradiction in how users and STEs perceive the pages (entertainment vs tourism information respectively), was argued as being a clear signal that STEs needed to define a social media strategy should they wish to gain control over the page and use it as an effective business tool. While users in the study demonstrated strong loyalty to the STEs, stronger control over the page will also allow STEs to utilise this loyalty for product and service improvements. STEs currently miss this opportunity since they cannot define their audience on Facebook, their interests, and preferences.

8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

This study is an important contribution to the growing tourism literature associated with social media adoption by STEs that compose the main business entities in the travel industry. The relatively small set of business cases, although based on convenience sampling, reveals important and significant insights, as well as portrays a representational picture of social media adoption by these small operators in the tourism domain. The study's contribution includes:

Conceptual Framework

This study proposed a theoretical framework for developing and measuring an effective social media presence by STEs as reflected in the business requirements, benefits and resources needed to adopt a Facebook presence. The theoretical framework also incorporated user or fan perceptions and motivations to use Facebook (see Chapter 2). These two conceptual areas emerged for directing the research following the literature review. The framework brings together constructs that deal with the features of small operators, as well as the users of the social media themselves as a means to capture the perceptions of two contributing entities with regard to the social media. Indeed, the conceptual framework sets the boundaries of the research across the two identified domains (user perceptions and STE adoption) that are precursors to understanding the Facebook presence of the STEs. Using the framework, the researcher examined the challenges and resources of STEs in Australia to develop a Facebook presence, and highlight findings from user satisfaction studies of ICT environments in general and social media environments in particular. An abridged version of the conceptual framework from Chapter 2 is depicted in Figure 8.1. It served as a solid basis for better understanding and interpreting the data. The conceptual framework was further developed and refined with the newly identified themes.

Figure 8.1 The study's conceptual framework (abridged from the literature review chapter)
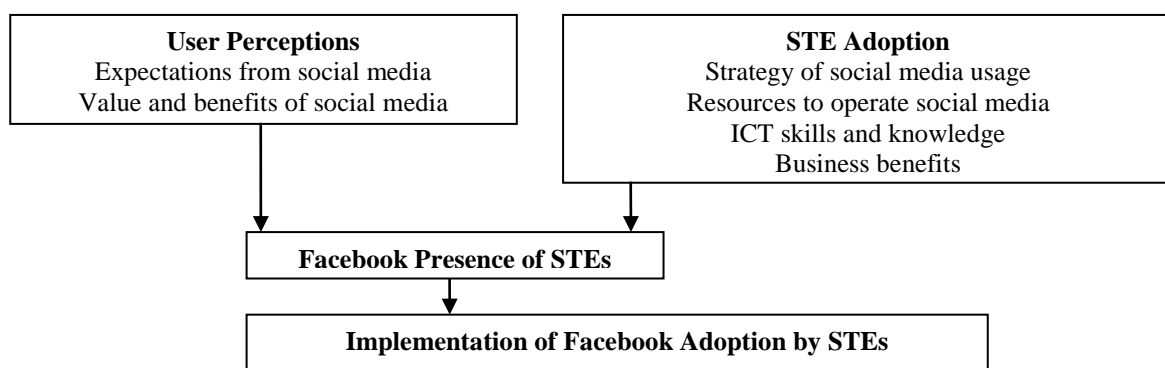
Although the framework focused on the Facebook platform, it is portable. Clearly, by developing the conceptual framework from the generic literature, the framework has the potential to be applied and extended as a measurement and adoption model to some of the other existing social media platforms.

An Implementation Model for Facebook Adoption by Australian STEs

The integrated review of the STE case studies and the user responses (questionnaires, interviews and page comments), as discussed in Chapter 7, led to the creation of an implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. The proposed model was based on the issues that STEs encountered in their Facebook work; their unique business needs, as expressed in the cases; and the user perceptions of the examined Facebook pages. The model has the potential to assist accommodation STEs to create and maintain an effective Facebook presence that can reach their social media targets through improved engagement with their target audience.

The model contains two main anchors. The first is the social media strategy that has to be developed by setting up measurable goals; by being able to define the target audience of the page; and by creating a clear content schedule. Resources and skills comprise the second anchor, which includes social media-related education for the STEs; time invested in developing the Facebook presence; and budget available for Facebook management. Finally, a social media presence for STEs, once developed, should constantly be measured and modified based on the impact of the attributes defining the two anchors.

Early Adopters in Focus

Despite its public launch date in 2004, Facebook is still considered a relatively recent innovation in ICT, one that is constantly being changed and developed. The adoption of social media by smaller businesses in general is at an early stage of adoption with relatively low uptake rates compared to larger business counterparts. Therefore, the STEs presented in the study can be regarded as a group of early adopters of Facebook.

Innovation adoption theory suggests that different levels of innovativeness define the timing and degree to which a person (or business) adopts a new concept or idea. In his theory, Rogers (2003) portrays the early adopters as people who feel more comfortable with new ideas and/or technology and who look for ways to improve their business. They are usually respected by their industry peers and are perceived as opinion leaders. According to Rogers,

these early adopters assist with reducing the uncertainty of an innovation or a new idea, providing relevant examples of how to use such recent innovations. The early adopters are an important group that can provide pertinent examples for other entities when it comes to a recent innovation – where they might emulate adoption, learn from, or even reject the innovation (Rogers 2003). The findings allowed an understanding of how and why Facebook was being used by those STEs allowing important practices to be discovered, as well as implementation difficulties.

Collaborating with STEs on Data Collection

The researcher collaborated with the participating STEs during the second data collection stage, when online questionnaires were posted on the actual Facebook pages that were under examination. The goal was to capture the authentic perceptions of the pages from their actual fans, rather than from a random group of users who may not have been familiar with the STEs' offerings and their social media activities. It also allowed a wider distribution of the questionnaires, as they were posted by the page administrators themselves and therefore increased the likelihood that the invitation to participate in the study would be potentially seen by all fans. Notably, the invitation to give the owner feedback on the STE's social media presence was seen as an opportunity for fans to contribute to the STEs, rather than being viewed as an external survey or a spam message that led to a high response rate. Collecting data on Facebook sites can be limiting due to user/fan access issues. Getting STE cooperation with data collection overcame this limitation and was an important methodological contribution of this study.

Looking at Both Businesses and Consumers

Rather than focusing on a narrow research field, this study examined both STEs and their fans on Facebook. This cross-examination of two different audiences allowed a better understanding of the Facebook adoption and discovered implementation issues and challenges. Therefore, it can be considered another contribution of this study.

8.4 Contribution to the Industry

STEs dominate the tourism market in Australia and overseas. Hence, the thesis provides the industry with an important study that documents important issues associated with Facebook adoption for the small accommodation operator. The suggested implementation model for Facebook adoption by STEs can assist those small accommodation operators who wish to

develop a business presence on Facebook or to improve an existing one. The model was developed considering the unique characteristics of STEs, their ICT skills and resources, and user perceptions on STE Facebook presence. Therefore, it offers those STEs that wish to use the model a structured, logical path to the creation of an effective Facebook presence. It can also save those STEs time and effort trying to understand how to build a Facebook strategy, or what users perceive as benefits in social media. Lastly, it potentially offers an approach that can be promoted via the various industry associates such as the YHA. This lifts the awareness of the social media platform amongst membership, allowing STEs to explore adoption.

8.5 Research Limitations and Future Research

One of the study's outcomes was the implementation model for Facebook adoption by Australian accommodation STEs. The model is based on the perceptions of a selected group of early adopting accommodation STEs and their fans. The model contains two anchors: one dealing with social media strategy, and the other addressing social media-related resources for the STEs. Although robust and well argued, the model needs to be tested with a larger group of accommodation STEs, allowing its effectiveness to be determined and to be modified where needed. Currently, the model is not generalisable; however, future quantitative or mixed method research should explore Facebook adoption patterns of a larger number of businesses in order to address this issue.

A set of early adopters was identified as the participating group in the research. Not all STEs initially approached wished to participate in the study, and hence sampling was one of convenience amongst this early group of adopters. Although early adopters have similar behaviour and traits, some of the STEs that declined to participate in the study may have been further advanced along the adoption spectrum. Hence, the development of the implementation model would not have captured some of these advanced features.

Focusing on Facebook as the social media platform is also a limitation. The researcher chose to examine only a single platform due to the scope of the PhD research, and Facebook was (and still is) the most popular social network in Australia during the time of writing. Future research should look at other social media platforms that STEs are using as part of their social communication efforts and examine whether the proposed implementation model in this study can be applied to different platforms. If not applicable, it can potentially assist to inform the development of a new model associated with these platforms. Although the study

focused on Australian STEs, researchers in different countries can use both the conceptual model and the implementation model developed as a basis to explore the adoption of the Facebook social media platform in their own country and culture. Although similarities would be expected, so would differences.

8.6 Conclusion

This thesis documented the adoption of Facebook as a business tool by Australian accommodation STEs who were found to be early adopters of social media. It examined why and how those STEs used Facebook based on a series of case studies. In addition, it captured user feedback of the examined Facebook pages in order to reveal their perceptions regarding the STEs. The findings led to the creation of an implementation model for Facebook adoption by STEs, which has the potential to assist STEs that wish to improve their current Facebook presence or to launch a new one.

New social media platforms are emerging, and with the growing use of smartphones and tablet devices for hotel research and bookings, it is expected that accommodation providers will keep communicating with potential guests via social networks. Indeed, the late and non-adopter STEs will have to learn how to function in this digital environment in order to successfully compete with similar providers from their region. Three years from the commencement of this study the concept of social media, and of Facebook in particular, is growing, and important elements of small tourism operators and their operation and marketing have evolved. It is anticipated that the results reported in this thesis will be a knowledge base for future academic research in the area.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The questions are organised under the three main areas that comprise the conceptual framework.

Strategy of Social Media Usage:

It is argued that many SMTEs cannot fully appreciate the huge potential that the internet plays in improving their business strategy (Franch, Martini et al. 2005). Therefore, these questions examine whether the participating SMTEs have adopted a strategy for their social media presence in the light of strategy-related good practices for social media usage (Beuker 2009; Owyang 2007; Stelzner 2010; Mayfield 2010).

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your customers?

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

Q: Why did you decide on this monitoring method?

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

Q: Why do you think that this is the content that matches your audience?

Q: Why do you/don't you use Twitter in addition to Facebook?

Resources to Operate Social Media:

Several authors suggested that SMTEs usually have limited IT resources, which makes it more difficult for them to adapt new technologies (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006). Therefore, these questions examine the resources available for the examined SMTEs in their social media work.

Q: How many hours a day on average do you spend on social media work?

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in XXXX?

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

ICT skills and knowledge:

Braun (2002) claimed that both the ICT infrastructure and the level of ICT skills among Australian SMTEs are insufficient. These questions examine the ICT skills of the interviewees who maintain the Facebook page of the relevant SMTE. The questions are not specific to social media skills but to ICT in general.

Q: If you could attend digital marketing sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your website?

Q: Who maintains your website?

Appendix B: STE responses (full interview transcripts)

Interview #1 – XXX Hotel (Jack, marketing manager)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: We realised that a lot of our customers are looking for us online. They want to engage with us online about what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel, whether it be bistro, accommodation, weddings, functions, etc., so there's definitely a strong demand, a strong push towards the online presence now. The traditional media is very expensive. It's not only a consumer push towards the online and the digital media space, but it's far more cost effective as well. And I guess we can also track a lot more where people are coming from, and what they are clicking on, and what they are engaging, and how long they are spending with us, so it's very valuable information for us as well in terms of making future decisions on where we allocate funds in a marketing budget in a digital space.

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: Two examples would be our website: we have a very detailed statistic component to that that we can monitor … as far as social media is concerned. With Facebook we use Google Adwords; we can run a very specific report on Facebook; we are targeting a specific demographic, so you might not be aware that we do a lot of weddings here … and we're running an ad on Facebook at the moment targeting the female market with regard to weddings (aged between 18 and 35); who have changed their relationship status on FB to engaged … Very specific, very targeted marketing. And we're sending an advertisement on to those pages saying 'Congratulations on your engagement from the XXX hotel. If you're thinking of a venue please keep us in mind and we'd love to give you a free gift for your engagement if you'll come down and have a tour' – and that has been very successful in attracting potential new function customers to the hotel. And, of course, we can track exactly how many people are clicking on those links. We're taking them to a very specific landing page on our wedding site … so we are able to monitor very closely the ROI and the performance of this specific campaign.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: Absolutely. Yeah, we're using that and we're using Google Analytics as well, so there's a lot of graphs, and charts and numbers …

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: Well, it varies … on Facebook it would depend – Facebook is obviously getting more towards the younger hotel clientele, so we talk more about events that are of interest to the younger market. Over summer there's a lot of events here that are very specific targeting … we have a snow party coming up … which we'll be doing a lot of Facebook promotions with it as well … you know, Facebook very much, you know, the younger market target …

Q: How can you define your target audience on social media? (Is it mainly youngsters on Facebook?)

A: On Facebook we are … it's all about sending the right message to the right person at the right time and not alienating somebody with a message that wouldn't be of interest to them, that would simply annoy them.

Q: How many computers do you work with to maintain your social media activity?

A: We have many computers here but it's really all from my computer … I manage this process … I'm in XXX a couple of days and in Melbourne a couple of days and I'm doing it from my notebook wherever I am.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in the hotel?

A: Yeah, it's ADSL connection here so it's very fast and reliable: more than adequate.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: Generally straight to Facebook. We tend to link from Facebook to certain web pages on our site that we're wanting to promote. Occasionally we might upload some images, we might, you know … very rarely use an image tool to resize or adjust an image to use on Facebook.

Q: Do you use TweetDeck, for example?

A: No, we speak to the basics really, so most of it is linking to the site and the way that Facebook represents it is more than adequate.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: We have. We allocated obviously some funds to the Facebook promotions we run, and some funds to Google AdWords as well, trying to attract people searching other reasons close by to consider us, mainly functions … we do have a budget … there is more trend. Put it this way – we're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital.

Q: What is the percentage of social-traditional media in terms of budget?

A: 20–30% of the overall spend.

Q: If you could attend ICT sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: The only internal skill that we don't have in the hotel is probably a graphic design resource … if we want to do something that really looks quite snazzy we would outsource that … but everything else we have really got covered internally. Most of the tools we use are fairly basic, especially with the social media component. If I have to choose one, I'd probably say the graphic design area.

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your website?

A: The challenge is to make sure that it's always fresh and the content is relevant and accurate. We try and update it as frequently as we can.

Q: Who maintains your website?

A: We do it internally … it allows us to have greater control over it, especially with the content. We just have a web-based CMS which is very user friendly… managing it in-house is a lot easier to ensure that the content is fresh.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Interview #2 – XXX Hotel (Annie, hotel owner)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: It was to cut down advertising costs. During the GFC (global financial crisis) our profits had gone down, people were going out less, and I couldn't afford all the newspapers ... so I was looking for other ways to advertise ... connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising.

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: ... I can advertise my events and specials and then you'll notice comments on the page. Customers know what's happening ... so we know if they are actually coming without doing any advertising, so we know it's working if we're getting business from the special promotions.

Q: Why did you decide on this monitoring method?

A: ... Facebook has grown so much, and I wanted customers to know what events are on without looking out in the paper. The other thing that I do with my website is I keep it updated weekly, and that gets very good results on the hmmm … Google. I come up number one.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: Hmmm ... yeah, well Facebook also emails each week a report on your page on how many fans it has increased by and how many people have visited the page and whatever, so I watch that ... (we have) nearly 900 fans now; it increases weekly.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: I'll put live music or bands that we have coming each weekend ... I might put in what specials we have in the restaurant. I try to do different things. Sometimes I promote our accommodation specials (like) $99 for the room, and then I'll put an image with that, like a photo of the room. I don't like to make very long updates: short is better, with an image ... or I'll link back to my website and encourage them to visit the website. I'll also follow what's happening in the area ... I might do links on articles that they (local newspaper online) do on what events are happening in the Gympie town: music festivals and things like that ... I try to make it a bit more interesting, not just about our hotel but what is happening in the town. I try to look at what my fans (want), and not just about me.

Q: Why do you think that this is the content that matches your audience?

A: I think it encourages people to stay with the page. They find it a bit more interesting ... (it's not just) hard sell all the time and they want to feel more like a community and connecting with the business, and they are more likely to make a comment. It's more like a community page I suppose. I think if you push too many sales at too many posts, you actually

lose fans and they will drop off your page. There was another thing I'm doing: I had a book on jokes for the pub and trivia, and now and again I'd put up a joke or a funny trivia question to do with the pub ... Friday night joke or something. Sometimes they (the users) will comment on that.

Q: Why do you use Twitter in addition to Facebook?

A: I set that up but it's growing slowly. It's about a 100 or so but hmmm ... I don't think it's the right area. I put a set up before I update my Facebook page. It automatically updates the Twitter account ... I've got it going but it's not really extra time; I just check whether anyone commented or new followers. I think Twitter is more for big cities than where we are. I think Twitter is good if ... (?) because Google will pick up on your Twitter updates, so it doesn't hurt to have it.

Q: How many computers do you work with to maintain your social media activity?

A: I've got my one laptop, so it's all on there, and I use TweetDeck for my Twitter account, and then Facebook ... in the office here I have a standalone computer.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in Gympie?

A: Well, I'm actually in Sydney ... I do it all from my Sydney home office. It's fine here (the internet).

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: That's about it (TweetDeck). I have a little flip camera to take short videos and I upload them into YouTube, and then I (upload) my YouTube videos onto Facebook and Twitter and the website. Just plug it into the computer and upload it and I edit it with Microsoft Movie Maker, but nothing expensive.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: Now and again I might do an ad on Facebook ... pay $10 a day for 2 weeks. That's the most I'll spend on that.

Q: If you could attend ICT sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: At the moment I'd like to learn more about the video on YouTube, creating the videos ... make the most of YouTube with your tagging.

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your website?

A: I don't really like the software my website is built on. I find it very difficult to use if you're building a page ... I find it very difficult to work with.

Q: Who maintains your website?

A: I do the website. I can do basic changes to it, and if it's something more graphical, I go to our website people who host the site.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Interview #3 – XXX Hotel (Kristy, admin, payroll and social media tasks)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: 'Cause it gets out there. It gets out to all the people that we want to attract.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: We can cover more different groups of people ... when I put something up about a show they send it up to all their friends as well ...

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: No.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: Mainly about the shows and any pictures that we have taken around the venue in the events that we've been having.

Q: Why do you think that this is the content that matches your audience?

A: I think it's more familiarity of what's going on.

Q: How many hours a day do you spend working on your Facebook page?

A: None. An hour a fortnight at the most.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in the hotel?

A: Definitely.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: No.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: No.

Q: If you could attend ICT sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: Because I'm not the one who's in charge of that sort of thing, and the only thing that I ever do is on Facebook ... I really don't think that I need to do anything. 'Cause it's not part of what I do.

Q: Who maintains your website?

A: The owner maintains the website herself.

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Interview #4 – XXX YHA Hostel (Jane, manager)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: I did it because I can see the value in Facebook. I have a personal page of my own that I use to keep in contact 'cause I'm not from Victoria ... I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straightaway what value it could have on the business.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: Image. It allows us to actually choose what image that we want to project ... the marketing machine of YHA only has a set image that they sell. Each hostel has a life and a DNA of its own, and it's impossible to convey that through the dollar value advertising, whereas Facebook ... if you look at our page you will actually see that this is our big house, and we have dinner parties ... and that's something we can't convey on a flyer. Where every single

hostel has the same layout of the advertising because it has to work for it on an Australia-wide network ...

Q: What do you think your visitors can benefit from the page?

A: We're looking for 2 groups of people: previous guests and potential guests. For the past guests, what they would benefit from is just being able to stay in touch with the place that they clearly loved ... and know what's going on there and feel like they are kind of a part of it still; and we've had since we've been here 4 or 5 groups that come back twice in 3 months, so there is a very big aspect of repeat business here because they feel like they are coming to visit us at their house. And for the potential guests, I get comments from people that haven't had the chance to come here yet saying 'It looks great. I want to go there'. We get that a lot.

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: Well, it's a home page on our internet. It's always open. I also receive notifications on my phone ... so the minute someone comments we know, wherever we are. We are constantly monitoring it ... because I do have some friends and family on there that don't actually understand that it's a business page and occasionally they send something totally inappropriate. I can't talk about the kangaroos as my cousin will say 'Oh, I wish I was there with my gun ...' That's not the image we want to portray so I would straightaway jump on and delete it. I'm a Facebook addict, and this is what came up at our national conference (YHA). There was a great debate and people not wanting to do this ... there's a lot of people resisting it because they are not Facebookers. I think it would be very hard for someone who doesn't Facebook to run a page, but I do think Facebook. And I have very detailed pages for myself and my son – so it's just an extension of that.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: Is that the report that they send you once a week? Yes, we do ... but they also send you an email, a full report one which is really helpful ... I send it on to head office.

Q: What is the report you send to YHA VIC?

A: They monitor ... the thing is, they want us to have a Facebook page, but there are lots of conditions on what we are and aren't allowed to do and what we must do. And what they don't want is for a whole lot of hostels to start a page 3 months ago, and then it becomes

outdated and irrelevant. So sending a report to them shows them that we've had recent activity. That makes them happy.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page? Is it the eco-thing?

A: I don't really think about it that much ... haven't thought of the page as a champion for the eco-course. Probably focused more on the social aspect of the hostel life and the wildlife. Because it's new to me … I'm running this page as if it's an extension of my life. It's like 'Oh, my gosh, there is a kangaroo in the backyard ...' That's probably the main focus of my page, just to be commenting on Halls Gap, telling the story about the waterfall that was underground and now is over ground ... At the conference we saw some research that had been done that said that as far as the expectations of Australia goes, the international tourists want the sun, the beach, the kangaroos ... There is an image in America that in Australia you see kangaroos walking down the street. Well, here we actually have kangaroos walking down the street ... it's kind of like feeding that expectation with the reality ...

Q: Do you use other social networks or just Facebook?

A: No, just Facebook. Personally, I tried MySpace a few years ago, and I didn't like it at all. Not interested in Twitter because I don't really understand it. I can't understand why somebody would follow anybody on Twitter. However, the CEO of South Australia YHA said that you can actually interface Twitter and Facebook so that your status updates go up as a Twitter post at the same time ... so I'm considering it.

Q: How many hours a day do you spend working on your Facebook page?

A: Less than an hour.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in Halls Gap?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your Facebook page?

A: Just Facebook ...

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: No, that's the beauty of it. It's free. It doesn't cost us anything, we just do it.

Q: So you don't use Facebook Ads?

A: What's that?

Q: The little ads on the right hand side of the screen.

A: Oh, yeah. No, we're not allowed to do that ... we have to get permission. We can't actually authorise the spending of any money.

Q: So YHA Victoria does not allow you to spend any money on social media activities?

A: It's not that they are not allowing us. They just said, 'If you want to do it you've got to apply'. And if we wanted to advertise on Facebook, we'd have to do that.

Q: If you could attend ICT sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: If I look at the topic list, I'd want to go to something that I didn't actually know anything about ... because I am fairly confident on Facebook.

Q: Who maintains your website? Is it YHA?

A: No, it's YHA Australia. And they maintain the website and that's why we had to prove to them that our Facebook page was worthy of being put as a link ... you'll see that on our page now is a 'like us on Facebook'. We had to earn that from YHA Australia by them watching the page for 4 weeks to make sure that we qualify. I don't even know them; they're in Sydney.

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Interview #5 – XXX Hotel (Michelle, receptionist and social media tasks)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: Because we realised that it's just growing and growing so much, and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: Well, I guess that although we're not supposed to ... a form of advertising in a way. Our loyal guests and people who do like us … we can keep them updated with special packages, even what's going on in town, the local area ...

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your customers?

A: I guess that they can get the automatic update notes ... it's in their face. They don't have a choice ... you know. They don't have to go searching for information. For example, the local gig guide, we put that on, and different concerts and gigs will come up, so it's all there for them to see without having to look for it.

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: We're very regularly checking it and looking at it, I guess.

Q: **Just visiting the page and seeing what's going on?**

A: Yes.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: Yeah, we look at that from time to time.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: We're trying to do different things. Like I said, what is sort of going on in the area … we've got a competition at the moment that we've got up there. The next races that are coming up, photos, you know ... a lovely day outside.

Q: Why do you think that this is the content that matches your audience?

A: I suppose because they liked us in the first place, and they want to know what's going on and what we're up to.

Q: **For example, you have this competition right now. Can you tell if it's successful or not?**

A: That one is just for the amount of likes. I want to get to 500. When we first put it up there we only had 60 or something and we've gone up to 130, which isn't huge but we had a good response in the first few days and it kind of slowed done a little bit.

Q: Do you use other social networks but Facebook?

A: Twitter, yeah.

Q: Is it as successful for you as Facebook is?

A: No ... it's definitely not as big. We're actually linked for everything that we post on Facebook to automatically go on to that Twitter account as well.

Q: How many hours a day do you spend working on your Facebook page?

A: Definitely no more than an hour a day. I suppose, yeah, just checking it regularly and adding a post here and there, but wouldn't be more than an hour.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in the Sapphire Coast?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: No, not really.

Q: Have you ever uploaded videos that you created?

A: No.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: No. We did try advertising. We did one little go with that, spent $20 or something, but that didn't really ... we've been thinking about doing it again but at the time it didn't really pay off.

Q: If you could attend ICT sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: I couldn't tell you really ... we actually have someone who looks after website design ...

Q: But let's say for you as the person who's responsible for Facebook, if you could ask for training in the area of social media marketing, what will you choose?

A: Video editing and image manipulation will be good to do.

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your Facebook page?

A: What to actually post. We're aiming to get to 500 likes but it's proving to be a bit more difficult than we thought it might. A bit slow.

Q: Who maintains your website?

A: We can, but we have a local guy that designed the website for us ... if we need to do basic things I know how to do that sort of stuff, but bigger things like adding pages, I'm slowly starting to learn but he does most of that for us.

***

Interview #6 – XXX Backpackers (Joe, owner)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: It's a massive medium that young people are travelling around the world with, and most travellers are keeping in touch with each other around the world. In the past you just took people's addresses and hope they will write. Now we have this incredible network of people who can meet. Make friends quickly and get in contact if they like. So, the main objective was to get people to keep mixing together, connect with each other, and to let people know whenever they are moving around what's happening in the backpackers. We bought a very horrible place and turned it into something really nice. I want all the people who stayed here in the past to see the changes. Communication with each other, communication with us, keeping in contact with the place …

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: There's a little tracking thing. I can't describe it … you can see how many people visited the page. You get an email sent every month showing you how many people are tracking your page.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights as well?

A: Insights? Oh, maybe I do. I get an email once in every two months from Facebook, so maybe it is that, but I didn't recognise the name.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: We're trying to put nice photos in there. If you want to market the place, you have got to make it memorable. So, we've got ideas on how to make it really memorable when we take photos and make videos.

A: Can you explain the 'are you in the mood?' under the 'about'?

Q: Albany has a marketing campaign saying 'amazing Albany', which we found to be extremely overused and dull. There's a lady in Albany who has a property and she put on her page 'are you in the mood?', and we thought that it's really good (and used it too). Since then, some younger travellers from overseas didn't really get it, so we're not really sure whether it works or not.

Q: How many hours a day on average do you spend on social media work?

A: Probably half an hour a day on it.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in Albany?

A: Yeah, it's OK … it probably can be a lot faster.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: No, I use a Mac, and I reduce the images in the default software.

Q: What about third party tabs?

A: I probably should (use them). I haven't had the time to check it; I was looking at somebody's page the other day and they had links for novice and questionnaires: it was very interactive. I have seen the page where you can go and create it, but I don't know how to use it.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: I use everything that comes free. I did one of their advertising campaigns for about 7 days. I wanted to lift the number of fans. I think I spent 2–3 dollars a day and got 50–60 extra people. So for me I wasn't sure if it was worth it, but I'll do it again I think because … if you have a product, you can isolate the target market almost to the niche level, and I think it's really clever.

Q: If you could attend digital marketing sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: Nothing that I can think of … I find it very user friendly. If you look (well enough), you can find anything you need. It's very user friendly. It really is a marketing tool that can be very lucrative. But most people don't know about that. I don't know about the lucrative side of Facebook. I don't know how to make money from it. There are programs out there marketing that but I don't trust them enough to buy them.

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your website?

A: It was developed for us and I maintain it. I am just finding it difficult at the moment in changing the slideshow. There's a code that I am missing but other than that it's all good.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: Visibility. Say Sven from Sweden is here, and he sends his photo to his parents, who send it to their friends in the Baltics, and they send it to their friends in Greenland, and suddenly you have got this network of people who see what your backpackers is like. It really is a marketing tool as well. I'm not using it nearly to its potential. There should be a lot more videos on there, more interactions going on. There's a lot more I could be doing.

Q: Did you get any bookings from FB? Did it help?

A: We've only got about 420 followers in there, but actually, yes I do. Since I linked it to the web page and because I optimised the web page with a company in Perth, we are getting a lot more bookings from the web page.

Q: Plans for 2012?

A: I'm interested to know what they are going to do to change it. I know they are going to change it. They almost have the potential to replace web pages.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Interview #7 – XXX Resort (Alex, owner)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: I already had my personal Facebook page. I did a seminar about getting business out of social media. You need to have a personal listing before you can have a business listing, so I did. I just followed the directions and did that. I'm not entirely sure whether I set it up right because it is sort of hard to link it to the website. But because the Tourism NT is really proactive in helping operators get active and market their businesses as successfully as possible, so I thought it's a good opportunity to go to the seminar.

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: Facebook sends you a weekly update to say how active it has been, and apart from that, I just check on it. I'm a bit disappointed at the moment. I think it's because I'm not fully utilising all its capabilities … not that many people actually interact with it. I want to know how to make it better. I tried to link my FB page with Trip Advisor, but it didn't work out. I'll probably have another look at it at some stage … maybe I haven't set it up right. I'm not sure, I need to talk to someone who knows these things.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page?

A: I try to publish interesting things that happen in the region: anything special or characteristic to our region like when we had floods or bushfires. I also like to publish photos of special functions and photos of people attending the functions, like the Christmas celebrations, and then people see themselves on there. I wish I had known their names, because then I could have tagged them with a message.

Q: Why do you think that this is the right content for your audience?

A: People like to read about themselves. It's actually a way of touching base with people from your business on a really personal manner. It's not like sending them bulk emails to tell them about special offers. Normally they are curious about that; it's just networking. Everything I can do to attract business to the resort rather than through a travel agent means more money in our pockets.

Q: How many hours a day on average do you spend on social media work?

A: Maybe an hour a week.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in Glen Helen?

A: No, but we can't do anymore because we have got a narrow band. I don't think it's that bad but people got used to faster internet.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: No, not really.

Q: Do you retouch photos before you upload them?

A: I never do anything with them.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: No.

Q: FB ads?

A: I didn't really investigate that. I spend enough money on advertising anyway, but maybe one day advertising on Facebook will be the way to go.

Q: If you could attend digital marketing sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: I'm about to finish a webinar program that's being run by an online marketing company, and quite blown away by all the topics like keywords and SEO … I could attend a webinar or a seminar every bloody day. I'm learning heaps with what I can do with my website. So I am taking around 2 seminars a year.

Q: What do you find difficult about maintaining your website?

A: At the moment I don't have access to the content management. I have a webmaster who sets it all up and if I want to change something I need to pay for it. This will change and I will have access to the content management system. The website will be more sophisticated and interactive: all kinds of little tools like live chat room, stuff that changes, the opportunity to do short-term promotions. I prefer to pay 40k on it to set it up, but then it works for me and I won't pay any extra. There's so much exciting stuff that is happening online that will actually give us better reach into the tourism world and also do it with less commission.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: I see it as a bit like a little club that people want to go into and feel like they get connected with your business. Just last night I was talking to some customers in the bar, and they have

been following the page quite closely, so it helps people to connect with you and so it makes them more likely to want to go there.

Q: Did you get any bookings from FB? Did it help?

A: Well, I suppose it does but I have to say I'm not at all sure how much yet. Maybe users go to Facebook and see the website. I don't know … I'm not sure yet how many bookings Facebook brings me … probably not a lot.

Q: Plans for 2012?

A: I want to try and leverage more out of Facebook. I want to start blogging. At the moment I'm not tweetering but I was told I should. I'll probably learn to do that too. Interacting with the people from Trip Advisor is another thing. I believe that it's pretty huge and it's going to increase the presence for us.

<div align="center">***</div>

Interview #8 – XXX Hotel (Ben, owner)

Q: Why have you adopted a social media presence in the first place?

A: I had a barman who is 10 years younger than me. He is heavily into social media so he took me into Facebook. We just found that it's a cost-effective way of communicating to the younger age group. Our advertising budget is quite small, so to use something cost-effective as Facebook that is free is pretty good. When you're looking at print media, radio and TV, it's great when you have that money to spend on advertising, but for small business you want the interaction and the feedback. We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us. That's why we try to post as many photos as we can. If you can get that interaction then you can know what works and what doesn't work. Whereas with traditional forms of media it's hard to quantify that (user engagement).

Q: How do you monitor your social media activities?

A: We get the Insights every couple of weeks, so I'll have a look at those. You can always see what works and what doesn't by the amount of interaction that you get. We used to do lots of events (event creation on Facebook) but not a lot of people were replying (rsvp'ing). So we have just put something in the status now.

Q: Do you use Facebook Insights?

A: We do. It gives you a good overview. It's a handy tool, but to be quite honest that wouldn't imply how I use Facebook. We've got a pretty good mix of what we do (on Facebook). It's handy to have, but won't affect the decisions that we make on Facebook.

Q: What sort of content do you publish on your page? (mention the donation project – UGLY)

A: We try to change it a little bit. We try to have regular live entertainment in the hotel, so that always goes on there. We try to post photos of live events, birthdays, Christmas and other special events. We raised money for the Leukaemia Foundation on the page. I think that the bigger thing with Facebook is to keep it as varied as you can, rather than posting the same stuff over and over again. Some hotels are doing that and you see that their interaction levels are low. Facebook can only be handy if you've got the interaction with your customers.

Q: Why do you write 'Rock>Paper>Scissors' in your posts?

A: That's a drink special that we have. We play a game and if the customer wins, they get it for free. That's been a really good promotion that we've done. It gets people excited. It's different.

Q: How many hours a day on average do you spend on social media work?

A: It's probably an hour a week.

Q: Are you satisfied with the speed on internet you have in Glen Helen?

A: Yes, we've got broadband now. When I arrived 10 years ago we only had dial up, but now it's better.

Q: Do you use different programs and tools to maintain your social media presence?

A: No, I try to keep it simple. I will link to 4square and stuff like that, but that's about it. (photo tools?) – yes.

Q: You have a tab called 'Vote for Us' – can you tell me about it? How did you add it to the page and why?

A: The lifestyle channel organised the 'I love Food' awards that we won 2 years ago, and they are doing it again this year. You can download a tab to the page and people can go and vote for you. We got a message from them in the post, which included instructions on how to download the tab.

Q: Did you allocate a special budget to social media?

A: No, zero dollars. It does not exist.

Q: FB Ads?

A: No, we tried it in the past but didn't get a lot from it. We haven't used it since. It's hard ... it's good that you can pin point it to your area rather than to all of Facebook, but you'd probably use it for a particular event. I'm not saying that I'll never use it … just not now.

Q: If you could attend digital marketing sessions, which topics would you like to cover?

A: I'd probably like to get more out of my website, and I've done some courses here which were very basic. Direct marketing interests me. I would like to have a combined marketing approach of my website and how it links in with the Facebook page. I don't think that they blend very well right now. Some of the bigger hotels are doing it very well. They blend it all in very well. Our website is 8 years old now, and we're trying to find out if it's beneficial to actually update more and to get a more integrated approach.

Q: Is FB easy for you?

A: Oh, yes it's basic.

Q: What is the value that Facebook brings to your business?

A: Just to be able to direct market to our customers in a cheap way.

Q: Did you get any bookings from FB? Did it help?

A: I don't think we get direct bookings, but rather exposure to our customers. That way you have to keep something up there. People now know that if they want to know what bands are playing, they will visit our Facebook page.

Q: Plans for 2012?

A: Probably just keep changing things up. I'd like to create some more video content.

Appendix C: STE Coding and Themes

Strategy Analysis – Coding

Recognition (R): The understanding of the value that social media (and Facebook, in particular) can bring to the business; the familiarity with its power in the online world (Shankland 2011; Derham, Cragg et al. 2011; Constantinides & Fountain 2008; Treadaway & Smith 2010)

Evaluation (E): Tracking and monitoring of the Facebook page (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010; Sherman 2010)

Content (C): Content-related responses (Solis 2010; Novak 2010; Green 2009; Muniz & Schau 2011)

Plans (P): Future plans regarding social media (Lauby 2009; Treadaway & Smith 2010; Russell 2010)

Reason (RE): Why does the business use Facebook? (Larson 2009; Barnes & Mattson 2009; Turban & Volonino 2011)

Challenges (CH): Problems with Facebook and with maximising its potential (Treadaway & Smith 2010; Muniz & Schau 2011)

Multi-channel (MC): Considering other social networks but Facebook

Table A1: Summary of Strategy of Social Media Usage – By Accommodation Providers (AP 1–8)

		Implementation of Themes	**Interviewee's Quote**
AP1	7.	Jack recognises the consumer push towards online presence, and understands that Facebook is more affordable than traditional media (RE).	*We realised that lots of our customers are looking for us online. They want to engage with us online, what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel … it's far more cost-effective as well (RE).*
	8.	Tracking the page's progress and	*We have a very detailed statistic*

		monitoring user conversations are important to Jack (E).	*component to that that we can monitor … we are able to monitor very closely the ROI and the performance of this specific campaign (E).*
	9.	Jack thinks of segmentation when communicating with the hotel's target audience: sending the right message to the right person. The hotel's Facebook page is aimed at the younger age groups, as Jack believes that Facebook fits younger audiences (C).	*Facebook is obviously getting more towards the younger hotel clientele, so we talk more about events that are of interest to the younger market (C).*
	10.	Jack cannot tell if Facebook actually contributes to the hotel's bookings, but feels that it does (CH).	*I can't prove that, but I would be very surprised if we didn't. We put a lot of publications out there of events and specials and so on, and I think that it definitely has an impact, no doubt about it. But we don't have a way of directly tracing that; when people ring and book we don't ask where they heard about it all the time (CH).*
	11.	Plans for the future are to grow by adding more content (P).	*Keep the growth up on it. It has become an integral part of our marketing strategy. The plan is really to push more and more information through it (P).*
AP2	1.	Annie understands that social media can help her spend less on advertising and uses it mainly for this reason	*It was to cut down advertising costs. During the GFC (global financial crisis) our profits had gone down.*

	(RE).	*People were going out less, and I couldn't afford all the newspapers ... so I was looking for other ways to advertise (RE).*
	2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are important to Annie. Facebook indirectly contributed to hotel bookings (E).	*I can advertise my events and specials and then you'll notice comments on the page. Customers know what's happening ... so we know if they are actually coming without doing any advertising ... It has helped with our bookings, but I suppose accommodation does come from the website mostly as people search online for accommodation (E).*
	3. Annie treats the Facebook page as a virtual community and not as a billboard, which is evident in the content she chooses to publish (C).	*I try to make it a bit more interesting (and to post) not just about our hotel but what is happening in the town. I try to look at what my fans (want), and not just about me (C).*
	4. She does not value Facebook as an experimental tool but rather equivalent to the hotel's website (R).	*Between Facebook, email and the website – we communicate all our offers and events to our customers (R).*
	5. Despite the above, Annie does not have a pre-planned social media strategy for the hotel (CH).	*I update the Facebook page at least once a day, sometimes twice (CH).*
AP3	1. Kristy values the viral potential that Facebook has to offer and uses it to reach the hotel's target audience (R).	*Because it gets out there. It gets out to all the people that we want to attract (R).*

	2.	Tracking is done through email notifications only (E).	*I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners (E).*
	3.	The content is almost exclusively about events and shows at the hotel (C).	*Mainly about the shows and any pictures that we have taken around the venue in the events that we've been having (C).*
AP4	6.	Short- and long-term benefits are clear to Jane, as she is already familiar with Facebook and with the values it brings to both the business and the customers (R).	*I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straightaway what value it could have on the business (R).*
	7.	Moderation based on a clear brand image is taking place, since it is important to Jane to make sure that the content matches the brand's image (E).	*That's not the image we want to portray so I would straightaway jump on and delete it ... sending a report to them (YHA) shows them that we've had recent activity (E).*
	8.	The page is monitored and tracked for improved results following YHA's request for a monthly report (E).	
	9.	No clear content plan is evident. Jane did not think of this aspect thoroughly, and follows her instincts as if the business page was an extension of her personal page on Facebook (C).	*(The content is) probably focused more on the social aspect of the hostel life and the wildlife (C).*
	10.	A set of other social networks was examined and a decision to focus on Facebook was made. Jane prefers to use a social network she understands and believes in its value (MC).	*Personally, I tried MySpace a few years ago, and I didn't like it at all. Not interested in Twitter because I don't really understand it (MC).*
AP5	1.	Michelle recognises the importance of	*We realised that it's just growing*

	Facebook as a marketing tool (R).	*and growing so much, and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it ... (R).*
	2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily but only by visiting the page (E).	*We're very regularly checking it and looking at it (E).*
	3. Michelle has a clear content strategy that contains a diverse range of content in different formats (C).	*We're trying to do different things. Like I said, what's sort of going on in the area, we've got a competition at the moment that we've got up there; the next races that are coming up, photos, you know ... (C).*
	4. Twitter is used as a duplication of the Facebook page (MC).	*We're actually linked for everything so that what we post on Facebook will automatically go on to that Twitter account as well (MC).*
AP6	1. Ease of communication between guests was the main reason for Joe to create the page (RE).	*It's a massive medium that young people use when travelling around the world ... So the main objective was to get people to keep mixing together, connect with each other, and to let people know whenever they are moving around what's happening in the backpackers (RE).*
	2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily, but only by visiting the page and checking the monthly email from Facebook. Joe feels that Facebook has helped generate bookings to the hostel (E).	*You get an email sent every month showing you how many people have visited your page ... We've only got about 420 followers, but actually yes I do (feel that the page led to bookings). Since I linked it to the web page and because I optimised the web page with a company in*

		3. Joe is aware of the need to post original content and apply it to the photos and videos that he uploads to the page (C).	*Perth, we are getting a lot more bookings from the web page (E).* *We're trying to put nice photos in there. If you want to market the place you've got to make it memorable (C).*
		4. Plans for 2012 are to keep learning how Facebook will change and grow (P).	*I'm interested to know what they are going to do to change it (the platform) (P).*
AP7		1. The main goal is to drive more business through Facebook rather than to pay agent commissions (RE).	*I see it as a bit like a little club that people want to go into and feel like they get connected with your business (RE).*
		2. Tracking is done mainly via the email from Facebook. Many question marks re user behaviour (E, CH).	*Facebook sends you a weekly update to say how active it has been, and apart from that, I just check on it. I want to know how to make it better (E).*
		3. The content is diverse and matches the audience (C).	*(We post about) interesting things that happen in the region, anything special or characteristic to our region like when we had floods or bushfires (C).*
		4. Not sure whether Facebook brings any bookings (CH).	*Well, I suppose it does but I have to say I'm not at all sure how much yet (CH).*
		5. Plans for next year: doing more in other social media platforms (P).	*I want to try and leverage more out of Facebook. I want to start blogging. At the moment I'm not tweetering but I was told I should.*

			I'll probably learn to do that too. Interacting with the people from Trip Advisor is another thing (P).
AP8	1.	Using Facebook as a low-cost marketing platform. One of the main objectives is to perform direct marketing activities with the customers (RE).	*We just found that it's a cost-effective way of communicating to the younger age group. Our advertising budget is quite small, so to use something as cost-effective as Facebook that is free is pretty good ... for small business you want the interaction and the feedback. We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us (RE).*
	2.	Tracking is done via the emails from Facebook; Facebook Insights is used sporadically (E).	*We get the Insights every couple of weeks, so I'll have a look at those. You can always see what works and what doesn't by the amount of interaction that you get ... To be quite honest, that (Facebook Insights) wouldn't impact on how I use Facebook. It's handy to have, but won't affect the decisions that we make on Facebook (E).*
	3.	There is a clear content strategy (C).	*We try to change it up (the content) a little bit. We try to have regular live entertainment in the hotel, so that always goes on there (on the page). We try to post photos of live events, birthdays ... I think that the bigger thing with Facebook is to keep it (the content) as varied as*

	4. No bookings were driven directly from Facebook (CH).	*you can, rather than posting the same stuff over and over again (C).*
		I don't think we get direct bookings but rather exposure to our customers (CH).
	5. Ben plans to add videos to the page next year (P).	*Probably just keep changing things up. I'd like to create some more video content (P).*

Table A2: Summary of Strategy of Social Media Usage – By Strategy Themes

	Implementation of Strategy	**Interviewee's Quote**
Recognition	1. She does not value Facebook as an experimental tool but rather equivalent to the hotel's website.	*1. Between Facebook, email and the website – we communicate all our offers and events to our customers (AP2).*
	2. Kristy values the viral potential that Facebook has to offer, and uses it to reach the hotel's target audience.	*2. Because it gets out there. It gets out to all the people that we want to attract (AP3).*
	3. Short- and long-term benefits are clear to Jane, as she is already familiar with Facebook and with the values it brings to both the business and the customers.	*3. I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straightaway what value it could have on the business (AP4).*
	4. Michelle recognises the importance of Facebook as a marketing tool.	*4. We realised that it's just growing and growing so much, and that we can't really afford to not be a*
	5. Joe is aware of the massive power that Facebook has as a communication tool for young	

	travellers.	*part of it ... (AP5).*
		5. *It's a massive medium that young people use when travelling around the world ... (AP6).*
Evaluation	1. Tracking the page's progress and monitoring user conversations are important to Jack.	1. *We have a very detailed statistic component to that that we can monitor ... we are able to monitor very closely the ROI and the performance of this specific campaign (AP1).*
	2. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are important to Annie.	
	3. Tracking is done through email notifications only.	2. *I can advertise my events and specials and then you'll notice comments on the page. Customers know what's happening ... so we know if they are actually coming without doing any advertising ... It has helped with our bookings, but I suppose accommodation does come from the website mostly as people search online for accommodation (AP2).*
	4. Moderation based on a clear brand image is taking place, since it is important to Jane to make sure that the content matches the brand's image. The page is monitored and tracked for improved results following YHA's request for a monthly report.	
	5. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily but only by visiting the page.	
	6. Tracking the growth of the page and monitoring user conversations are done daily but only by visiting the page and checking the monthly	3. *I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners (AP3).*
		4. *That's not the image we*

	email from Facebook. Joe feels that Facebook has helped generate bookings to the hostel. 7. Tracking is done mainly via the email from Facebook. 8. Tracking is done via the emails from Facebook; Facebook Insights is used sporadically.		*want to portray so I would straightaway jump on and delete it ... sending a report to them (YHA) shows them that we've had recent activity (AP4).* 5. *We're very regularly checking it and looking at it (AP5).* 6. *You get an email sent every month showing you how many people have visited your page ... We've only got about 420 followers, but, actually yes, I do (feel that the page led to bookings). Since I linked it to the web page and because I optimised the web page with a company in Perth, we are getting a lot more bookings from the web page (AP6).* 7. *Facebook sends you a weekly update to say how active it has been, and apart from that, I just check on it. I want to know how to make it better (AP7).* 8. *We get the Insights every couple of weeks, so I'll*

		have a look at those. You can always see what works and what doesn't by the amount of interaction that you get ... To be quite honest, that (Facebook Insights) wouldn't impact on how I use Facebook. It's handy to have but won't affect the decisions that we make on Facebook (AP8).
Content	1. Jack thinks of segmentation when communicating with the hotel's target audience: sending the right message to the right person. The hotel's Facebook page is aimed at the younger age groups, as Jack believes that Facebook fits younger audiences. 2. Annie treats the Facebook page as a virtual community and not as a billboard, which is evident in the content she chooses to publish. 3. The content is almost exclusively about events and shows at the hotel. 4. No clear content plan is evident. Jane did not think of this aspect thoroughly, and follows her instincts as if the business page was an	*1. Facebook is obviously getting more towards the younger hotel clientele, so we talk more about events that are of interest to the younger market (AP1).* *2. I try to make it a bit more interesting (and to post) not just about our hotel but what is happening in the town. I try to look at what my fans (want), and not just about me (AP2).* *3. Mainly about the shows and any pictures that we have taken around the venue in the events that we've been having (AP3).* *4. (The content is) probably focused more on the social*

		extension of her personal page on Facebook.	*aspect of the hostel life and the wildlife (AP4).*
		5. Michelle has a clear content strategy that contains a diverse range of content in different formats.	5. *We're trying to do different things. Like I said, what's sort of going on in the area. We've got a competition at the moment that we've got up there, the next races that are coming up, photos, you know ... (AP5).*
		6. Joe is aware of the need to post original content and apply it to the photos and videos that he uploads to the page.	6. *We're trying to put nice photos in there. If you want to market the place you've got to make it memorable (AP6).*
		7. The content is diverse and matches the audience.	7. *(We post about) interesting things that happen in the region, anything special or characteristic to our region like when we had floods or bushfires (AP7).*
		8. There is a clear content strategy.	8. *We try to change it up (the content) a little bit. We try to have regular live entertainment in the hotel, so that always goes on there (on the page). We try to post photos of live events, birthdays ... I think that the bigger thing with Facebook is to keep it (the*

		content) as varied as you can, rather than posting the same stuff over and over again (AP8).
Plans	1. Plans for the future are to grow by adding more content. 2. Plans for 2012 are to keep learning how Facebook will change and grow. 3. Plans for next year: doing more in other social media platforms. 4. Ben plans to add videos to the page next year.	1. *Keep the growth up on it. It has become an integral part of our marketing strategy. The plan is really to push more and more information through it (AP1).* 2. *I'm interested to know what they are going to do to change it (the platform) (AP6).* 3. *I want to try and leverage more of Facebook. I want to start blogging. At the moment I'm not tweetering but I was told I should. I'll probably learn to do that too. Interacting with the people from Trip Advisor is another thing (AP7).* 4. *Probably just keep changing things up. I'd like to create some more video content (AP8).*
Reasons	1. Jack recognises the consumer push towards online presence, and understands that Facebook	1. *We realised that a lot of our customers are looking for us online. They want to*

	is more affordable than traditional media	*engage with us online, what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel ... it's far more cost-effective as well (AP1).*
	2. Annie understands that social media can help her spend less on advertising, and uses it mainly for this reason.	2. *It was to cut down advertising costs. During the GFC (global financial crisis) our profits had gone down, people were going out less, and I couldn't afford all the newspapers ... so I was looking for other ways to advertise.*
	3. Ease of communication between guests was the main reason for Joe to create the page.	
	4. The main goal is to drive more business through Facebook by creating a 'closed group' atmosphere rather than to pay agent commissions.	3. *So the main objective was to get people to keep mixing together, connect with each other, and to let people know whenever they are moving around what's happening in the backpackers (AP6).*
	5. Using Facebook as a low-cost marketing platform. One of the main objectives is to perform direct marketing activities with the customers.	4. *I see it as a bit like a little club that people want to go into and feel like they get connected with your business (AP7).*
		5. *We just found that it's a cost-effective way of communicating to the younger age group. Our advertising budget is quite*

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			small, so to use something as cost-effective as Facebook that is free is pretty good ... for small business you want the interaction and the feedback. We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us (AP8).
Challenges		1. Jack cannot tell if Facebook actually contributes to the hotel's bookings but feels that it does. 2. Despite the above, Annie does not have a pre-planned social media strategy for the hotel. 3. Many question marks re user behaviour. Not sure whether Facebook brings any bookings. 4. No bookings were driven directly from Facebook.	*1. I can't prove that but I would be very surprised if we didn't. We put a lot of publications out there of events and specials and so on, and I think that it definitely has an impact, no doubt about it. But we don't have a way of directly tracing that. When people ring and book we don't ask where they heard about it all the time (AP1).* *2. I update the Facebook page at least once a day, sometimes twice (AP2).* *3. Well, I suppose it does (bring bookings) but I have to say I'm not at all sure how many yet (AP7).* *4. I don't think we get direct bookings but rather*

		exposure to our customers (AP8).
Multi-Channels	1. A set of other social networks was examined and a decision to focus on Facebook was made. Jane prefers to use a social network she understands and believes in its value. 2. Twitter is used as a duplication of the Facebook page.	1. *Personally, I tried MySpace a few years ago, and I didn't like it at all. Not interested in Twitter because I don't really understand it (AP4).* 2. *We're actually linked so that everything that we post on Facebook will automatically go on to that Twitter account as well (AP5).*

ICT Skills and Knowledge to Operate Social Media Analysis – Coding

Confidence (C): How confident the participants are with using Facebook for business purposes.

Assistance (A): The areas in social media marketing and ICT in general that the participants felt they need assistance with.

Website (W): Who operates the official website of the STE and how the web work is done.

Table A1: Summary of ICT Skills and Knowledge to Operate Social Media – By Accommodation Providers (AP 1–8)

	Implementation of Themes	Interviewee's Quote
AP1	3. Difficulties with web design, difficulties with content creation (A).	*The only internal skill that we don't have in the hotel is probably a graphic design resource … The challenge is to make sure that it's always fresh and the content is relevant and accurate … we try and*

		update it as frequently as we can (A).
AP2	1. Difficulties with video editing (A).	*At the moment I'd like to learn more about the video on YouTube, creating the videos ... make the most of YouTube with your tagging (A).*
	2. Difficulties with the content management system of the hotel's website: an external agency maintains the website (W).	*I don't really like the software my website is built on. I find it very difficult to use if you're building a page ... I find it very difficult to work with (W).*
AP3	1. Kristy does not believe that she should be familiar with any ICT-related techniques as her responsibility with Facebook is a different matter. She does not see Facebook as an ICT product (C).	*Because I'm not the one who's in charge of that sort of thing, and the only thing that I ever do is on Facebook ... I really don't think that I need to do anything. 'Cause it's not part of what I do (C).*
AP4	3. Jane feels knowledgeable enough when it comes to Facebook marketing – but does not use basic features such as Facebook Ads (C).	*(I'm) fairly confident on Facebook (C).*
	4. Jane has nothing to do with the maintenance of the official website, which is done from a remote office (W).	*It's YHA Australia. And they maintain the website (W).*
AP5	1. Difficulties with video editing, image editing and writing (A).	*What to actually post (is the hardest part). We're aiming to get to 500 likes but it's proving to be a bit more difficult than we thought it*

			might (A).
	2.	Difficulties with more advanced tasks on the official website of the motel (W).	*We have a local guy that designed the website for us ... if we need to do basic things I know how to do that sort of stuff, but bigger things like adding pages I'm slowly starting to learn but he does most of that for us (W).*
AP6	1.	Facebook is easy to use (C).	*I find it very user friendly (C).*
	2.	More training is required in utilising Facebook as an e-commerce tool (A).	*I don't know about the lucrative side of Facebook. I don't know how to make money from it. There are programs out there marketing that, but I don't trust them enough to buy them (A).*
	3.	Joe is maintaining the hostel's website and is familiar with html coding (W).	*It was developed for us and I maintain it (the website). I am just finding it difficult at the moment in changing the slideshow. There's a code that I am missing but other than that it's all good (W).*
AP7	1.	Alex attends regular social media seminars and webinars (A).	*I'm about to finish a webinar program that's being run by an*

		online marketing company, and quite blown away by all the topics, like keywords and SEO. I could attend a webinar or a seminar every bloody day. I'm learning heaps with what I can do with my website. So I am taking around two seminars a year (A).
	2. She does not have access to the content management system of the resort's website. The website will be upgraded soon to include more features and a better content management system (W).	*At the moment I don't have access to the content management … this will change and I will have access to the content management system. The website will be more sophisticated and interactive; all kinds of little tools like live chat room, stuff that changes, the opportunity to do short-term promotions (W).*
AP8	1. Facebook is easy to use (C).	*Oh, yes. It's a very basic platform (C).*
	2. More training is required on how to better integrate Facebook with the website (A).	*Direct marketing interests me. I would like to have a combined marketing approach of my website and how it links in with the Facebook page. I don't think that they blend very well right now (A).*

Table A2: Summary of ICT Skills and Knowledge of Social Media Usage – By Resources Themes

	Implementation of Resources	**Interviewee's Quote**
Confidence	1. Kristy does not believe that she should be familiar with any ICT-related techniques as her responsibility with Facebook is a different matter. She does not see Facebook as an ICT product (AP3). 2. Jane feels knowledgeable enough when it comes to Facebook marketing – but does not use basic features such as Facebook Ads (AP4). 3. Facebook is easy to use (AP6). 3. Facebook is easy to use (AP8).	1. *Because I'm not the one who's in charge of that sort of thing, and the only thing that I ever do is on Facebook … I really don't think that I need to do anything. 'Cause it's not part of what I do (AP3).* 2. *(I'm) fairly confident on Facebook (AP4).* 3. *I find it very user friendly (AP6).* 4. *Oh, yes. It's a very basic platform (AP8).*
Assistance	1. Difficulties with web design, difficulties with content creation (AP1). 2. Difficulties with video editing (AP2).	1. *The only internal skill that we don't have in the hotel is probably a graphic design resource … The challenge is to make sure that it's always fresh and the content is relevant and accurate … We try and update it as frequently as we can (AP1).* 2. *At the moment I'd like to learn more about the video*

		on YouTube, creating the videos ... make the most of YouTube with your tagging (AP2).
	3. Difficulties with video editing, image editing and writing (AP5).	3. *What to actually post (is the hardest part). We're aiming to get to 500 likes but it's proving to be a bit more difficult than we thought it might (AP5).*
	4. More training is required in utilising Facebook as an e-commerce tool (AP6).	4. *I don't know about the lucrative side of Facebook. I don't know how to make money from it. There are programs out there marketing that, but I don't trust them enough to buy them (AP6).*
	5. Alex attends regular social media seminars and webinars (AP7).	5. *I'm about to finish a webinar program that's being run by an online marketing company, and quite blown away by all the topics, like keywords and SEO. I could attend a webinar or a seminar every bloody day. I'm learning heaps with what I can do with my website. So I am taking around two seminars a year (AP7).*
	6. More training is required on how to better integrate	

	Facebook with the website (AP8).	*6. Direct marketing interests me. I would like to have a combined marketing approach of my website and how it links in with the Facebook page. I don't think that they blend very well right now (AP8).*
Website	1. Difficulties with the content management system of the hotel's website: an external agency maintains the website (AP2).	*1. I don't really like the software my website is built on. I find it very difficult to use if you're building a page ... I find it very difficult to work with (AP2).*
	2. Jane has nothing to do with the maintenance of the official website, which is done from a remote office (AP4).	*2. It's YHA Australia. And they maintain the website (AP4).*
	3. Difficulties with more advanced tasks on the official website of the motel (AP5).	*3. We have a local guy that designed the website for us ... if we need to do basic things I know how to do that sort of stuff, but bigger things like adding pages I'm slowly starting to learn but he does most of that for us (AP5).*
	4. Joe is maintaining the hostel's website and is familiar with	*4. It was developed for us and I maintain it (the website). I am just*

	html coding (AP6).	*finding it difficult at the moment in changing the slideshow. There's a code that I am missing but other than that it's all good (AP6).*
	5. She does not have access to the content management system of the resort's website. The website will be upgraded soon to include more features and a better content management system (AP7).	5. *At the moment I don't have access to the content management … This will change and I will have access to the content management system. The website will be more sophisticated and interactive. All kinds of little tools like live chat room, stuff that changes, the opportunity to do short-term promotions (AP7).*

Resources to Operate Social Media Analysis – Coding

Internet Connectivity (IC): the quality of web surfing (internet speed) at the location of the business (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006)

Tools (T): using third party software and applications in order to enrich the Facebook page with additional content (Arrington 2008; Munoz & Towner 2010)

Budget (B): the funds dedicated specifically to social media marketing (Franch, Martini et al. 2005; McGrath, Abrahams et al. 2006; Ozgener & Iraz 2006)

Time (TI): the frequency with which the Facebook page is being monitored and maintained (Brogan 2007; Novak 2010)

Table A1: Summary of Resources to Operate Social Media – By Accommodation Providers (AP 1–8)

	Implementation of Themes	Interviewee's Quote
AP1	4. Jack reports on an excellent internet connectivity in the hotel's area (IC).	*It's ADSL connection here so it's very fast and reliable, more than adequate (IC).*
	5. No third party tools are used by Jack to assist him with maintaining the page, as he finds them complex. The only exception is an image manipulation tool (T).	*I generally go straight to Facebook ... very rarely use an image tool to resize or adjust an image to use on Facebook ... we speak to the basics really (T).*
	6. The hotel has allocated a special budget for its social media activities (B).	*We're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital (B).*
AP2	1. Annie works from her Sydney home office and so enjoys a good internet quality (IC).	*I do it all from my Sydney home office. It's fine here (the internet) (IC).*
	2. She uses some third party tools to increase engagement (T).	*I have a little flip camera to take short videos and I upload them into YouTube, and then I (upload) my YouTube videos onto Facebook and Twitter and the website ... and I edit it with Microsoft Movie Maker, but nothing expensive ... I use TweetDeck for my Twitter account (T).*
	3. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities but sometimes spends a small amount	*Now and again I might do an ad on Facebook ... pay $10 a day for 2 weeks. That's the most I'll spend on*

		of money on Facebook ads (B).	*that (B).*
AP3		1. Kristy invests a very limited time maintaining the Facebook page (TI). 2. There is no dedicated social media budget (B). 3. She does not use any third party tools to enhance user experience (T). 4. Internet speed is fine (IC).	*An hour a fortnight at the most (TI).*
AP4		5. Jane reports on a satisfying internet connection in the hostel's area, despite its relative remoteness (IC). 6. No third party tools are used to maintain the page as Jane is not aware of them (T). 7. No special budget for social media activities was allocated. YHA controls the budget and an approval is needed for any social media expenditure. It does not seem to bother Annie too much as she enjoys the fact that Facebook is free (B).	*Just Facebook ... What's that? (in regard to Facebook Ads) (T).* *No, that's the beauty of it. It's free. It doesn't cost us anything. We just do it.* *... we're not allowed to do that ... we have to get permission. We can't actually authorise spending of any money (B).*
AP5		1. The Facebook page is maintained daily (TI). 2. Third party tools were used to build two applications (T).	*Definitely no more than an hour a day. Just checking it regularly and adding a post here and there, but wouldn't be more than an hour (TI).* *Well, that one (the application) is really just for the amount of likes*

		that we get, so we're aiming to get to 500 ... we had a good response in the first few days. We're just checking the likes every day if they have gone up (T).
	3. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities (B).	*No (no special budget for social media). We did try advertising. We did one little go with that. We just spent $20 or something ... we've been thinking of doing that again but at the time it didn't really pay off. It didn't seem to make any difference so we didn't worry about it (B).*
AP6	1. The Facebook page is maintained daily (TI).	*Probably half an hour a day on it (TI).*
	2. A third party application (of Booking.com) was added to the page after a period when it had no applications due to lack of knowledge (T).	*I probably should (use applications). I haven't had the time to check it; I was looking at somebody's page the other day and they had links for novice and questionnaires. It was very interactive. I have seen the page where you can go and create it, but I don't know how to use it ... Booking.com is a company we get a lot of bookings from, so it seemed sensible to add it to the Facebook page. I am not sure what effect this will have because I don't think I can*

		3. The hostel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities (B).	*monitor its effect, but it will certainly be a positive addition (T).* *I use everything that comes free. I did one of their advertising campaigns for about 7 days. I wanted to lift the number of fans. I think I spent 2–3 dollars a day and got 50–60 extra people. So for me I wasn't sure if it was worth it, but I'll do it again I think because … if you have a product, you can isolate the target market almost to the niche level, and I think it's really clever (B).*
		4. Internet speed is slow but still allows content upload (IC).	*Yeah, it's OK … it probably can be a lot faster (IC).*
AP7		1. The Facebook page is maintained once a week (TI). 2. Internet speed is not ideal (IC). 3. The resort has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities (B).	*Maybe an hour a week (TI).* *No, but we can't do any more because we've got a narrow band (IC).* *I didn't really investigate that (creating Facebook Ads). I spend enough money on advertising anyway, but maybe one day advertising on Facebook will be the way to go (B).* *No, not really (use applications and*

	4. No third party applications were used (T).		*third party tools) (T).*
AP8	1. The Facebook page is maintained once a week (TI). 2. A third party application was added to the page though Ben perceives those applications as complex (T). 3. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities. Facebook Ads are not used at the moment although Ben recognises their value (B). 4. Internet speed is satisfactory (IC).		*It's probably an hour a week (TI).* *I don't use these tools; I try to keep it simple. I will link to Foursquare and similar social networks but that's about it. We got a message from them (the third party application provider) in the post about this opportunity, which included instructions on how to download the tab (T).* *No, zero dollars. It does not exist. We tried it (Facebook Ads) in the past but didn't get a lot from it. We haven't used it since. It's hard ... it's good that you can pinpoint it to your area rather than to all of Facebook, but you'd probably use it for a particular event. I'm not saying that I'll never use it, just not now (B).* *Yes, we've got broadband now. When I arrived 10 years ago we only had dial up, but now it's better (IC).*

Table A2: Summary of Resources of Social Media Usage – By Resources Themes

	Implementation of Resources	**Interviewee's Quote**
Connectivity	1. Jack reports on an excellent internet connectivity in the hotel's area. 2. Annie works from her Sydney home office and so enjoys a good internet quality. 3. Internet speed is fine. 4. Jane reports on a satisfying internet connection in the hostel's area, despite its relative remoteness. 5. Internet speed is slow, but still allows content upload. 6. Internet speed is not ideal. 7. Internet speed is satisfactory.	6. *It's ADSL connection here so it's very fast and reliable, more than adequate.* 7. *I do it all from my Sydney home office. It's fine here (the internet).* 8. *'Yes' (do you enjoy a good internet connectivity).* 9. *Same as 3.* 10. *Yeah, it's OK … it probably can be a lot faster.* 11. *No, but we can't do any more because we've got a narrow band.* 12. *Yes, we've got broadband now. When I arrived 10 years ago we only had dial up, but now it's better.*
Tools	1. No third party tools are used by Jack to assist him maintaining the page as he finds them complex. The only exception is an image manipulation tool. 2. She uses some third party	1. *I generally go straight to Facebook ... very rarely use an image tool to resize or adjust an image to use on Facebook ... We speak to the basics really.* 2. *I have a little flip camera to*

| | | tools to increase engagement. | take short videos and I upload them into YouTube, and then I (upload) my YouTube videos onto Facebook and Twitter and the website ... and I edit it with Microsoft Movie Maker, but nothing expensive ... I use TweetDeck for my Twitter account. |

3. She does not use any third party tools to enhance user experience.

4. No third party tools are used to maintain the page as Jane is not aware of them.

5. Third party tools were used to build two applications.

6. A third party application (of Booking.com) was added to the page after a period when it had no applications due to lack of knowledge.

7. No third party applications were used.

8. A third party application was added to the page, though Ben perceives those applications as complex.

3. *No.*

4. *Just Facebook ... What's that? (in regard to Facebook Ads).*

5. *Well, that one (the application) is really just for the amount of likes that we get, so we're aiming to get to 500 ... We had a good response in the first few days. We're just checking the likes every day if they have gone up.*

6. *I probably should (use applications). I haven't had the time to check it; I was looking at somebody's page the other day and they had links for novice and questionnaires. It was very interactive. I have seen the*

		page where you can go and create it, but I don't know how to use it ... Booking.com is a company we get a lot of bookings from, so it seemed sensible to add it to the Facebook page. I am not sure what effect this will have because I don't think I can monitor its effect, but it will certainly be a positive addition.
		7. *No, not really (use applications and third party tools).*
		8. *I don't use these tools; I try to keep it simple. I will link to Foursquare and similar social networks, but that's about it ... We got a message from them (the third part application provider) in the post about this opportunity, which included instructions on how to download the tab.*
Budget	1. The hotel has allocated a special budget for its social media activities. 2. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social	1. *We're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very*

		media activities but sometimes spends a small amount of money on Facebook Ads.	*expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital.*
		3. There is no dedicated social media budget.	2. *Now and again I might do an ad on Facebook … pay $10 a day for 2 weeks. That's the most I'll spend on that.*
		4. No special budget for social media activities was allocated. YHA controls the budget and an approval is needed for any social media expenditure. It does not seem to bother Annie too much as she enjoys the fact that Facebook is free.	3. *No.*
			4. *No, that's the beauty of it, it's free. It doesn't cost us anything, we just do it … We can't actually authorise spending of any money.*
		5. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities.	5. *No (no special budget for social media). We did try advertising. We did one little go with that. We just spent $20 or something … We've been thinking of doing that again but at the time it didn't really pay off. It didn't seem to make any difference so we didn't worry about it.*
		6. The hostel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities.	
		7. The resort has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities.	
		8. The hotel has not allocated a special budget for its social media activities.	
		9. Facebook Ads are not used at the moment although Ben recognises their value.	6. *I use everything that comes free. I did one of their advertising campaigns for about 7 days, I wanted to lift the number of fans. I think I spent 2–3 dollars a*

		day and got 50–60 extra people. So for me I wasn't sure if it was worth it, but I'll do it again I think because … if you have a product, you can isolate the target market almost to the niche level, and I think it's really clever.
		7. *I didn't really investigate that (creating Facebook Ads). I spend enough money on advertising anyway, but maybe one day advertising on Facebook will be the way to go.*
		8. *No, zero dollars. It does not exist.*
		9. *We tried it (Facebook Ads) in the past but didn't get a lot from it. We haven't used it since. It's hard … it's good that you can pinpoint it to your area rather than to all of Facebook, but you'd probably use it for a particular event. I'm not saying that I'll never use it, just not now.*
Time	1. Kristy invests a very limited time maintaining the Facebook	1. *An hour a fortnight at the most.*

	page.	2. *Definitely no more than an hour a day. Just checking it regularly and adding a post here and there but wouldn't be more than an hour.*
	2. The Facebook page is maintained daily.	
	3. The Facebook page is maintained daily.	3. *Probably half an hour a day on it.*
	4. The Facebook page is maintained once a week.	4. *Maybe an hour a week.*
	5. The Facebook page is maintained once a week.	5. *It's probably an hour a week.*
Control	There is a limited freedom in operating the page due to strong and close involvement of YHA.	*... we're not allowed to do that ... we have to get permission.*

Business Benefits from Operating Social Media Analysis – Coding

Characteristics (C): Facebook's unique features that make it easy to use; easy to track and measure performance; and easy to experiment with (Derham, Cragg et al. 2011)

Guests (G): The extra customer value that guests are getting from the Facebook page – which later translates into bookings: a platform that provides online information about the business; a platform that allows guests to revive holiday experiences; and a communication tool (Monday, Burgess et al. 2009)

Reach (R): Facebook helps the business in getting to a larger audience than before, and as a consequence, provides better segmentation options in the marketing process, as well as cross-promotional opportunities

Cost (CO): Facebook helps the business in saving money for advertising

Knowledge Transfer (KT): Knowledge transfer opportunities within the tourism industry as a result of using Facebook

Table A1: Summary of Business Benefits from Operating Social Media – By Accommodation Providers (AP 1–8)

	Implementation of Themes	Interviewee's Quote
AP1	6. Past and future guests can find the hotel on Facebook, learn of its facilities and activities, and communicate with it directly; providing guests with the hotel's digital presence that they were looking for (G). 7. Saving money on marketing activities (CO). 8. Freedom to experiment with ads; good tracking capabilities that enable Jack to do cross marketing campaigns between Facebook and the website (R).	*We realised that a lot of our customers are looking for us online. They want to engage with us online, what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel ... (G).* *We're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital (CO).* *We can track exactly how many people are clicking on those links ... (R).*
AP2	5. Past and future guests can join an online community to revive holiday experiences or to learn about the hotel	*... they want to feel more like a community and connecting with the business (G).*

	(G).	
	6. Cutting down the advertising costs (CO).	*I was looking for other ways to advertise ... connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising (CO).*
	7. Facebook is a simple tool for Annie to work with; good tracking capabilities that enable Annie to learn about the e-satisfaction of her users (C).	*I can advertise my events and specials and then you'll notice comments on the page, customers know what's happening ... so we know if they are actually coming without doing any advertising (C).*
AP3	5. Communicating with a larger audience; expanding the target audience with better segmentation (R). 6. Facebook is a simple tool for Kristy to work with; good tracking capabilities that enable Kristy to learn about the performance of the page and therefore to improve it (C).	*We can cover more different groups of people (R).* *I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners (C).*
AP4	1. Past guests feel close to the hostel and revive their holiday memories; potential guests receive valuable information (G). 2. No learning is required: The system is familiar to Jane (personal experience); Facebook is easy to use (personal experience); Effective observation of	*... just be able to stay in touch with the place that they clearly loved ... and know what's going on there and feel like they are kind of a part of it still (G).* *I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see straightaway what value it could have on the business (C).*

	Jane's audience on Facebook: Tracking and monitoring are important for Jane and for YHA (C).	
AP5	6. Facebook is an improved advertising platform enabling guests to learn more about the hotel (G).	*It's a form of advertising in a way. Our loyal guests and people who do like us, we can keep them updated (G).*
	7. Facebook is a simple tool for Michelle to work with; the system allows Michelle to experiment with different tactics and campaigns; Michelle feels that she can learn about the page dynamics by visiting it daily (C).	*We did try advertising; we did one little go with that, spent $20 or something, but that didn't really ... it didn't really pay off (C).*
	8. Michelle understands the global phenomenon that is social media and therefore Facebook's adoption rates will grow (R).	*We realised that it's just growing and growing so much and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it (R).*
AP6	6. Visibility and global exposure (R).	*Say Sven from Sweden is here, and he sends his photo to his parents, who send it to their friends in the Baltics, and they send it to their friends in Greenland, and suddenly you get this network of people who see what your hostel is like (R).*
	7. Facebook is a simple tool for Joe to work with; an experiment with	*I find it very user friendly (C).*

	Facebook Ads was done (C).	
	8. Extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with each other easily (G).	*It's a massive medium that young people are travelling around the world with, and most travellers are keeping in touch with each other around the world (G).*
	9. Knowledge transfer within the business/industry (KT).	*There's a lady in Albany who has a property and she put on her page "are you in the mood?", and we thought that it's really good (and used it too) (KT).*
AP7	4. Facebook is like a social club that will drive more direct bookings to the resort (G).	Just last night I was talking to some customers in the bar, and they have been following the page quite closely, so it helps people to connect with you and so it makes them more likely to make them want to go there (G).
	5. Ease of use: Facebook is a simple tool for Alex to work with (C).	
	6. Facebook is a good tool for cross promotional marketing activities (R).	*I tried to link my FB page with Trip Advisor, but it didn't work out. I'll probably have another look at it at some stage … maybe I haven't set it up right (R).*
AP8	7. Facebook offers an affordable	*Just to be able to direct the market*

			Interviewee's Quote
		marketing platform (CO).	*to our customers in a cheap way (CO).*
	8.	Facebook allows the business to communicate with its customers faster than any other media channel; extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with the business easily (G).	*We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us (AP8).* *We play a game and if the customer wins they get it (the drink) for free. That's been a really good promotion that we've done. It gets people excited. It's different (C).*
	9.	Facebook is a simple tool for Ben to work with, which saves him time and money on training; an experiment with Facebook Ads was done; more may come in the future. These experiments did not put at risk the hotel's budget or credibility thanks to the experimental nature of Facebook (C).	*I had a barman who is 10 years younger than me; he is heavily into social media so he took me into Facebook (KT).*
	10.	Knowledge transfer within the business (KT).	

Table A2: Summary of ICT Skills and Knowledge of Social Media Usage – By Resources Themes

	Implementation of Resources	**Interviewee's Quote**
Characteristics	1. Facebook is a simple tool for Annie to work with; good tracking capabilities that enable Annie to learn about the e-satisfaction of her users (C).	*I get the notifications to my personal email about that, and I just look at them and pass messages to the owners (AP3).*
	2. No learning is required: The system is familiar to Jane	*I have seen how the network works on a social level. I could see*

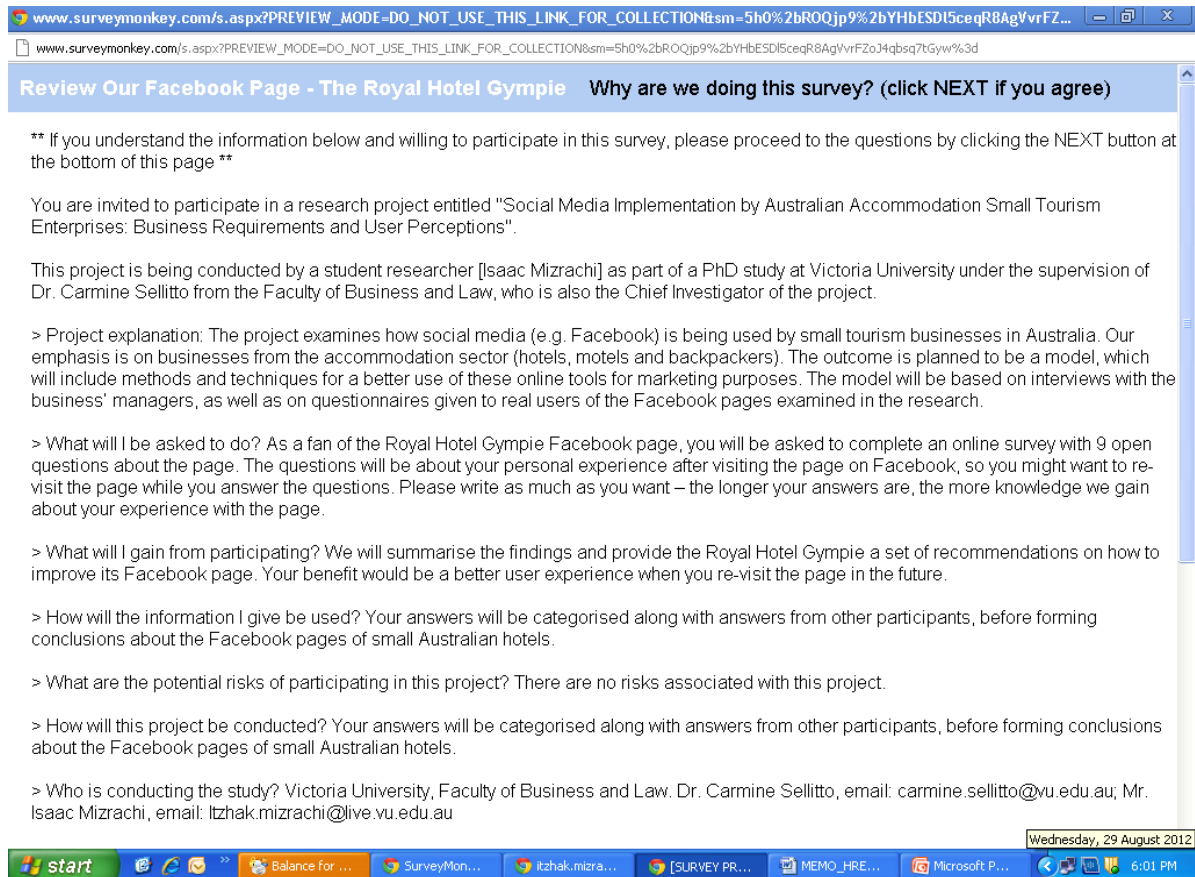|		
	(personal experience); Facebook is easy to use (personal experience). Effective observation of Jane's audience on Facebook: Tracking and monitoring are important for Jane and for YHA (C).	*straightaway what value it could have on the business (AP4).*
	3. Facebook is a simple tool for Michelle to work with; the system allows Michelle to experiment with different tactics and campaigns; Michelle feels that she can learn about the page dynamics by visiting it daily (C).	*We did try advertising. We did one little go with that, spent $20 or something, but that didn't really ... it didn't really pay off (AP5).* *I find it very user friendly (AP6).*
	4. Facebook is a simple tool for Joe to work with; an experiment with Facebook Ads was done (C).	
	10. Facebook is a simple tool for Joe to work with; an experiment with Facebook Ads was done (C).	*We play a game and if the customer wins they get it (the drink) for free. That's been a really good promotion that we've done. It gets people excited. It's different (AP8).*
	11. Facebook is a simple tool for Ben to work with, which saves him time and money on training; an experiment with Facebook Ads was done; more	

	may come in the future. These experiments did not put at risk the hotel's budget or credibility thanks to the experimental nature of Facebook (C).	
Guests	1. Past and future guests can find the hotel on Facebook, learn of its facilities and activities, and communicate with it directly; providing guests with the hotel's digital presence that they were looking for (G).	*We realised that a lot of our customers are looking for us online. They want to engage with us online, what happens in the hotel, and researching for tourist info regarding the hotel ... (AP1).*
	2. Past and future guests can join an online community to revive holiday experiences or to learn about the hotel (G).	*... they want to feel more like a community and connecting with the business (AP2).*
	3. Past guests feel close to the hostel and revive their holiday memories; potential guests receive valuable information (G).	*... just be able to stay in touch with the place that they clearly loved ... and know what's going on there and feel like they kind of a part of it still (AP4).*
	4. Extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with each other	*It's a massive medium that young people are travelling around the world with, and most travellers are keeping in touch with each other*

	easily (G).	*around the world (AP6).*
		Just last night I was talking to some customers at the bar, and they have been following the page quite closely, so it helps people to connect with you and so it makes them more likely to make them want to go there (AP7).
	5. Facebook is like a social club that will drive more direct bookings to the resort (G).	
		We can put something on our Facebook page and get our customers interacting with us (AP8).
	6. Facebook allows the business to communicate with its customers faster than any other media channel; extra customer value in allowing past guests to communicate with the business easily (G).	
Reach	1. Freedom to experiment with ads; good tracking capabilities that enable Jack to do cross marketing campaigns between Facebook and the website (R).	*We can track exactly how many people are clicking on those links ... (AP1).*
	2. Communicating with a larger audience; expanding the target audience with better segmentation (R).	*We can cover more different groups of people (AP3).*
	3. Michelle understands the global phenomenon that is social media and therefore Facebook's adoption rates will	*We realised that it's just growing and growing so much and that we can't really afford to not be a part of it (AP5).*

	grow (R).	
	4. Visibility and global exposure (R).	*Say Sven from Sweden is here, and he sends his photo to his parents, who send it to their friends in the Baltics, and they send it to their friends in Greenland, and suddenly you get this network of people who see what your hostel is like (AP6).*
	5. Facebook is a good tool for cross promotional marketing activities (R).	*I tried to link my FB page with Trip Advisor, but it didn't work out. I'll probably have another look at it at some stage … maybe I haven't set it up right (AP7).*
Cost	1. Saving money on marketing activities (CO).	*We're taking more money away from traditional media and traditional print, magazines and so on that are normally very expensive and we're pushing all that money into digital (AP1).*
	2. Cutting down the advertising costs (CO).	*I was looking for other ways to advertise … connect with the customers without spending thousands on advertising (AP2).*
	3. Facebook offers an affordable marketing platform (CO).	*Just to be able to direct market to our customers in a cheap way (AP8).*
Knowledge Transfer	1. Knowledge transfer within the business/industry (KT).	*There's a lady in Albany who has a property and she put on her page "are you in the mood?" and we*

	2. Knowledge transfer within the business (KT).	*thought that it's really good (and used it too) (AP6).* *I had a barman who is 10 years younger than me; he is heavily into social media so he took me into Facebook (AP8).*

Appendix D: Online Questionnaire (Screen Shots)

Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie   Why are we doing this survey? (click NEXT if you agree)

** If you understand the information below and willing to participate in this survey, please proceed to the questions by clicking the NEXT button at the bottom of this page **

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Social Media Implementation by Australian Accommodation Small Tourism Enterprises: Business Requirements and User Perceptions".

This project is being conducted by a student researcher [Isaac Mizrachi] as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Dr. Carmine Sellitto from the Faculty of Business and Law, who is also the Chief Investigator of the project.

> Project explanation: The project examines how social media (e.g. Facebook) is being used by small tourism businesses in Australia. Our emphasis is on businesses from the accommodation sector (hotels, motels and backpackers). The outcome is planned to be a model, which will include methods and techniques for a better use of these online tools for marketing purposes. The model will be based on interviews with the business' managers, as well as on questionnaires given to real users of the Facebook pages examined in the research.

> What will I be asked to do? As a fan of the Royal Hotel Gympie Facebook page, you will be asked to complete an online survey with 9 open questions about the page. The questions will be about your personal experience after visiting the page on Facebook, so you might want to re-visit the page while you answer the questions. Please write as much as you want – the longer your answers are, the more knowledge we gain about your experience with the page.

> What will I gain from participating? We will summarise the findings and provide the Royal Hotel Gympie a set of recommendations on how to improve its Facebook page. Your benefit would be a better user experience when you re-visit the page in the future.

> How will the information I give be used? Your answers will be categorised along with answers from other participants, before forming conclusions about the Facebook pages of small Australian hotels.

> What are the potential risks of participating in this project? There are no risks associated with this project.

> How will this project be conducted? Your answers will be categorised along with answers from other participants, before forming conclusions about the Facebook pages of small Australian hotels.

> Who is conducting the study? Victoria University, Faculty of Business and Law. Dr. Carmine Sellitto, email: carmine.sellitto@vu.edu.au; Mr. Isaac Mizrachi, email: Itzhak.mizrachi@live.vu.edu.au

Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie

Write your answers in the boxes and click NEXT when done (1/4)

1. Why did you 'like' this page to become a fan?

2. Why do you think the Royal Hotel Gympie has created this Facebook page?

Prev   Next

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Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie

Write your answers in the boxes and click NEXT when done (2/4)

3. What are the main 2-3 things that you feel this page has given you?

4. Did you share or are you interested in sharing items from this page with your friends on Facebook? Why are you sharing/not sharing these items?

5. Do you believe you could use this page as a tourist guide if visiting the region? Will it be informative enough for your needs? (If not, please explain why)

6. Are you interested in following this page just for entertainment, even without planning to stay at the hotel? Explain your answer.

Prev   Next

www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=5h0%2bROQjp9%2bYHbESDl5ceqR8AgVvrFZoJ4qbsq7tGyw%3d

Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie

Write your answers in the boxes and click NEXT when done (3/4)

7. Are you satisfied with the content published on the page? (Content relates to text, photos and videos). What do you like (or don't like) about the content?

8. Did you find the page fun and interesting to visit? What did you like about it? What do you think can make it better?

9. Was there anything that you didn't like about the page? What was it and why didn't you like it?

Prev   Next

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[SURVEY PREVIEW MODE] Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie Survey - Google Chrome

www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?PREVIEW_MODE=DO_NOT_USE_THIS_LINK_FOR_COLLECTION&sm=5h0%2bROQjp9%2bYHbESDl5ceqR8AgVvrFZoJ4qbsq7tGyw%3d

Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie

Write your answers in the boxes and click NEXT when done (4/4)

10. What is your age group?

○ 13-17
○ 18-35
○ 36-50
○ 51 and over

11. Where are you from?

○ Same state where the hotel is located
○ Other state
○ International

12. What is your gender?

○ Female
○ Male

13. How often do you use Facebook?

○ Every day
○ Once or twice a week
○ Once or twice a month
○ Very rarely

Review Our Facebook Page - The Royal Hotel Gympie   **Please click DONE and thank you for participating!**

14. That's it! Just click DONE to send us your answers.

In case we need to clarify some of your answers, could we give you a call to discuss? If so, please leave your name and telephone number in the box below.

Many thanks for your time,
The Royal Hotel Gympie

Prev   Done

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Check out our sample surveys and create your own now!
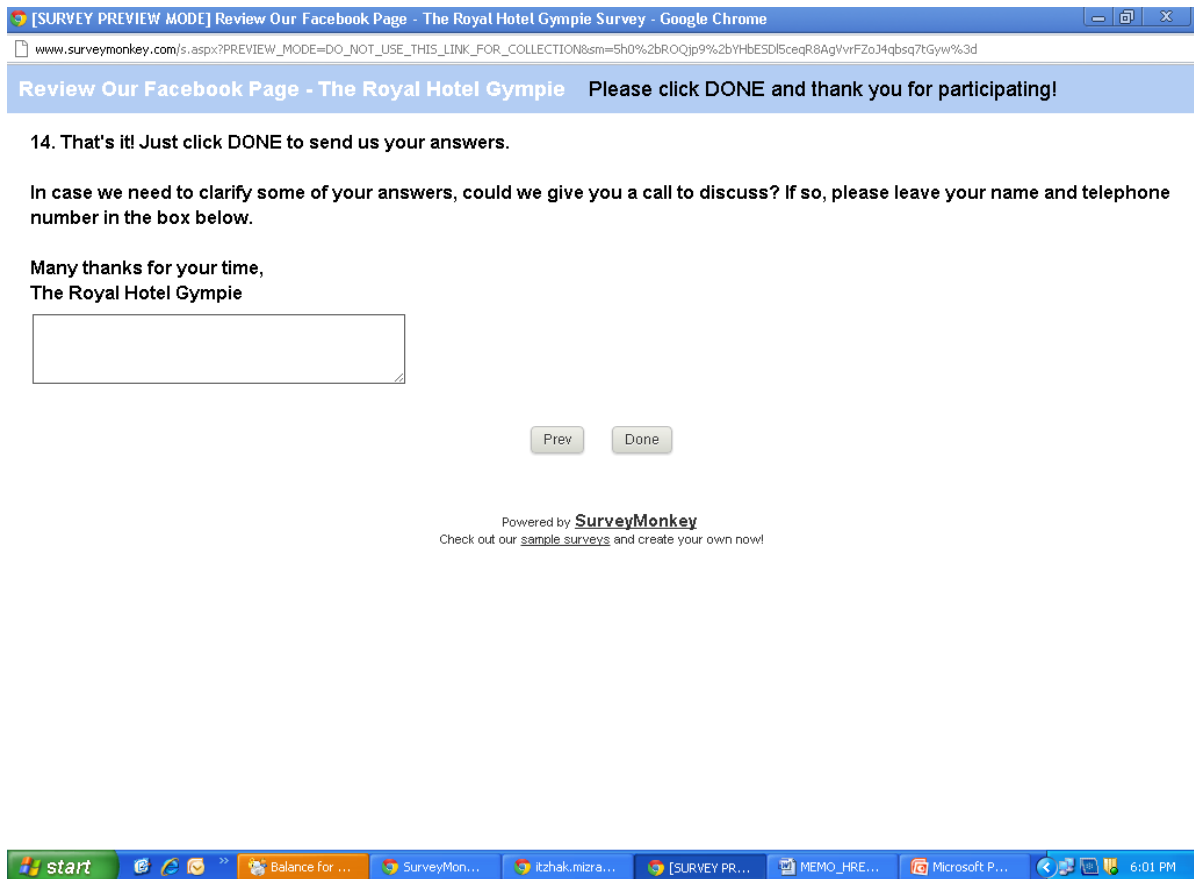
Appendix E: User Responses

Question 1: Why did you 'like' this page to become a fan?					
Accommodation Provider 4	**Accommodation Provider 5**	**Accommodation Provider 7**	**Accommodation Provider 2**	**Accommodation Provider 8**	**Accommodation Provider 6**
1. I stayed at YHA several years ago and I liked my stay very much (S). 2. I used to be a director of YHA Vic and I love the Grampians hostel (P). 3. Because I went there (S).	1. Follow what is happening (I). 2. I constantly seek competitions for holidays and this page is running a competition for a holiday stay (C). 3. Because they have exciting competitions and great prizes to win but also give me a lot of updates of what is happening in Merimbula (C, I). 4. Looking for good accommodation with a friendly atmosphere and found it (S). 5. *(Why have you joined hotel pages on FB?).* Some of	1. I spent two weeks there last April (S).	1. To find out what they have in entertainment and meals (I). 2. All of it. 3. Because I visit the Royal often and want to know what bands and such are playing. It's my favourite place to hang out (S, I). 4. Because it's one of my favourite places to visit and I like to know what would be happening (promos, bands, etc.) on a weekend (S, I).	1. The Bellum is so relaxed, family orientated. Beautiful people who own and work there. I have been to many functions in the last 9 years there (S). 2. For updates from the pub on up and coming events (I). 3. Because I love this pub (S). 4. Local pub, good grub (S). 5. Because the pub is just up the road, the meals are fantastic & the staff are pretty awesome too (S).	1. Stayed there and loved it (S). 2. Because the experience at the hotel was good ... just to say what they are up to, they are very friendly people. Now and again I write comments and stay in touch with them (S, K).

them because I stayed there, some because I intend to stay there, and others that run competitions I join them too (S, C).			6. Good place (S).	

Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. To attract a bigger audience (R). 2. To get more attention and publicity and perhaps repeat visits to the hostel. It's a smart idea (P, B). 3. To keep people informed as to what they are doing (I).	1. To communicate with its customers (C). 2. To create awareness of not only their business, but also what is available to do in the area, in order to gain new customers (P, B). 3. Facebook is such a big network used by a lot of people of different ages so it's a great way to get their word out there	1. Marketing (P).	1. To get more business and bookings (B). 2. (For) people to meet friends at the Royal (C). 3. To keep up with the times and to advertise (the hotel) (U, P). 4. For advertising and to keep regular customers up to date with specials and other information (P, I). 5. Just to know what's happening I guess,	1. To move with the times, it is an effective way of communicating what functions are on and events (U, I). 2. To interact with its patrons and advertise in another way (C, P). 3. To encourage more people to go to the pub (P). 4. Promo purposes. Get more people down for	1. To inform, to keep people aware, for fun (I, F). 2. Staying in contact with guests in a more informal way (C).

| | 4. To advertise their awesome accommodation and share the love of Merimbula (P).
5. Exposure by word of mouth really (P). | | (R). what's coming up. Like a billboard. (I) | gigs. Especially Scotty Fincky! (P).
5. Because everyone is on FB these days … Be there or be square! (U). | |

Question 3: What are the main 2–3 things that you feel this page has given you?

Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. Information about what is happening at the hostel. Nice pictures (I, E). 2. Entertainment and information (I, E).	1. Information about the hotel and Merimbula (I). 2. Awareness of whale watching opportunities in the area, also opportunities to win prizes just by being a Top Fan (I, E). 3. Good information and great competitions (I, E). 4. (What can people get …) They can get	1. It brings back memories, beautiful pictures (E, M).	1. Feedback (F). 2. Knowing who's playing, what's happening for special occasions, and I also like the posts (I, E). 3. A way to plan a night out in advance and good deals for lunch/dinner (I). 4. I don't know … just the information about events (I).	1. Update on events (I). 2. Information on gigs that are on, meals, socials (I). 3. Updates on events that are happening and menu changes (I). 4. Updates and specials (I). 5. Entertainment, food (E, I). 6. What's happening & when (I).	1. Fun (E). 2. Upcoming events, specials that they are running, etc. (I).

	information on what's going on in the area, events and so on. They can also get discounts and special rates, packages and so on. I can get all that from the Sapphire's page. I actually joined that page because I'm interested in family history and I have ancestors that came from there. I wanted to visit and looked for a place to stay, and this is how I found it (I, E).				

Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6

1. I only shared the photo competition because I wanted to win it. I didn't win … (Oh … I also shared one or two of the photos because they were great (P). 2. Yes – good pictures (C).	1. Yes. 2. I share the page most days when I can. I share not only the interesting articles (whale watching) but also so the page can get to 2000 likes in order for them to have their big giveaway (P, C). 3. Yes, I share the page so everyone is aware of the great deals (D). 4. Yes, I have shared photos with my friends. I found it interesting and this is why I shared it. For example, they have whale watching and that's something my friends would love to read	1. Yes.	1. Sometimes (I share). 2. (I share items with) all my friends. 3. I would share something that interests me and that might interest someone else. I recommend the Royal when people ask me where's a good meal or party place (W). 4. I have shared this page before as well as some funny pictures that had been put up. I just think sometimes a post is too good not to share! (C). 5. Just enjoy it myself and move on. I will only share the funny stuff (C).	1. I don't go out much. 2. Lol, I am still not up with how to share stuff on Facebook. 3. Yes, when there is something that I think my friends will enjoy. 4. I share to let others know if they are not a fan (of the page) (W). 5. (I share) some funny shit. 6. Have shared with family, so they could see how far out of the mount it is as we go to the Bellum rather than town pubs.	1. Yes, 'cause it's a great option for accommodation in Albany. 6. Probably just enjoy it myself. Normally I don't share items on Facebook.

	about (C).				

Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. Not sure. I haven't looked closely at it to make this judgement. 2. Not really – it's just about life at the hostel.	1. Maybe. 2. I have learned a lot about the Merimbula area just by following this page, so yes! 3. Yes, it can be a tourist guide too.	1. I would need more info, but it does give me a good sense of feeling about the place itself.	1. Yes, it would help people on holidays. 2. Yes, it could serve as a tourist guide. 3. Yes, you could, maybe some photos of people enjoying themselves would help. 4. I think you could use it as a tourist guide. All the information you need is there as well as a link to their actual website. 5. No, probably look for more information on the internet ... I will need more information than what the page has. The page is helpful	1. Yes, it can be a tourist guide. 2. The Bellum should maybe promote that it is near Mt Shank, a volcano. 3. Yes, because if people are in town they can look to see where they can eat plus entertainment. 4. Maybe? 5. (The page) should be able to function as a tourist guide too.	1. Could do with a bit more about the region, suggested itineraries, etc. 7. It's probably not enough. It needs to have more about Albany on the page. (Perceptions on Albany from the page): friendly, lots to do.

			for tourists but not enough. I will Google too. (perceptions on Gympie from the page): Probably young, up to date place. Pretty cool place.		

Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. No. I love the hostel and I hope to stay there soon. 2. Yes – it is interesting and funny and full of real people and animals.	1. No. 2. Absolutely! Although I do have plans in coming down to stay for a few days thanks to the great vibe received from this page – it is a NICE page that I do enjoy visiting, not just because they are running a competition! 3. Not just for entertainment, mainly for planning my trip.	1. Yes, because I've been there.	1. Entertainment and meal specials (are the reasons I follow this page – not accommodation). 2. Yes (I could follow it just for entertainment). 3. Yes, I live in Gympie; I don't need somewhere to stay. 4. Well, I live nearby so there is no need for me to stay, so I would just use it for entertainment. However,	1. Yes, as I live close enough not to need accommodation. 2. Yes, of course, I need to be reminded of things. 3. Yes, I live up the road from the Bellum. So it's handy for me. 4. Yeah, it's a great page. I will follow it just for entertainment. 5. Yep. Good	1. Yes. Good to keep in touch.

				if I didn't live nearby I would probably stay.	people, good food. Love you Troy.	

Question 7: Are you satisfied with the content published on the page? (Content relates to text, photos and videos). What do you like (or don't like) about the content?					
Accommodation Provider 4	**Accommodation Provider 5**	**Accommodation Provider 7**	**Accommodation Provider 2**	**Accommodation Provider 8**	**Accommodation Provider 6**
1. What I have seen is great. I like it. 2. It's all great.	1. I find the content quite interesting, as I've said, I've learned a lot about the area thanks to the articles included. Fabulous video footage!! 2. Yes. 3. Very satisfied, always good information. 4. What content do you like to see on FB in general? And in hotels pages? Competitions ... that's my main reason to be on there.	1. More updates (are needed).	1. No complaints here. 2. I like it all; maybe they could have some extra specials on the menu that change, especially for the regulars. 3. I think everything is fine. I haven't found anything offensive and like the 'what's on at the Royal' section each week. 4. What content do you like to see on FB in general? And in hotels' pages? To see what people are up to, what people are doing.	1. Content is great. 2. Yep, it's good. 3. It is fine ... 4. I like the updates about the specials and the photos. 5. Can't complain. 6. Yep, love the pics, shows you all have an awesome true-style Aussie humour!	1. Yes, like it all. It's quite 'folksy'. 2. What content do you like to see on FB in general? And in hotels' pages? I don't really have a preference. Just stuff about travel and backpacking in other countries.

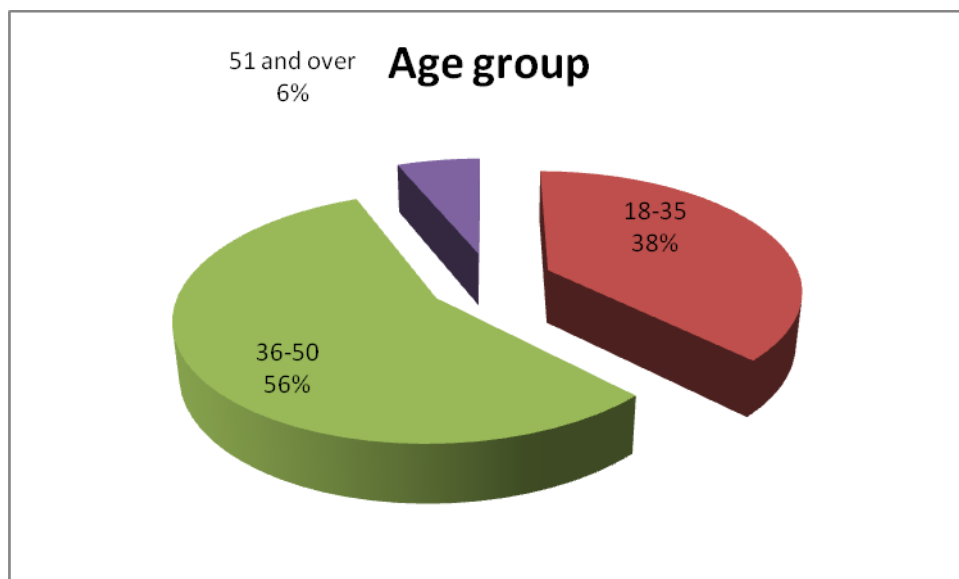| Question 8: Did you find the page fun and interesting to visit? What did you like about it? What do you think can make it better?					
Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. I like the photos. Facebook is all about engaging photos so keep them up. 2. Comedy! And lots of real-life stuff.	1. Definitely! I like the constant updates on the page, the owners really do a great job in promoting the area and promoting their business in a non-pushy way. 2. Yes. 3. More pictures of the town (are needed), and information attractions, etc.	1. The look and feel is great. More interaction would be better.	1. Yes, it is fun. 2. Yes, it's an interesting page. 3. The posts are fun; you could advertise that you cater to gluten-free because people do look for that. 4. The page was very informative and fun. I'm not sure on what could be done to make it better.	1. The page is there for advertising, which it does well. 2. I only take notice of status updates. I don't visit pages often. 3. Yes, it's a fun page. 4. Yes, the page is fun. I don't think you can make it any better. It's a great page. 5. Haven't looked for a while, but usually click on the page when the notifications pop up.	1. It's OK, but more Albany info is needed.

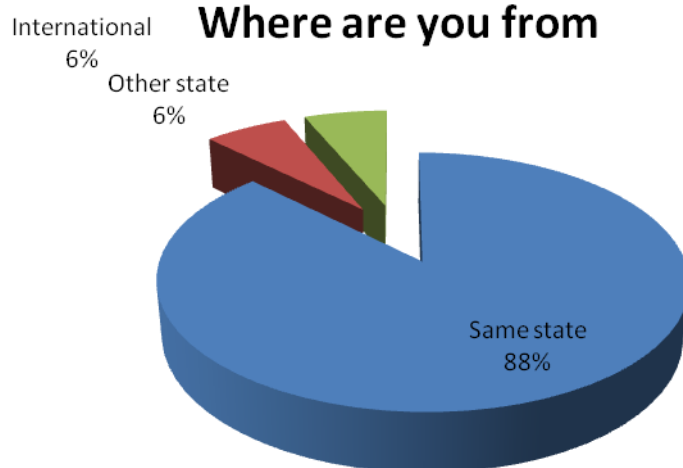| Question 9: Was there anything that you didn't like about the page? What was it and why didn't you like it?					
Accommodation Provider 4	Accommodation Provider 5	Accommodation Provider 7	Accommodation Provider 2	Accommodation Provider 8	Accommodation Provider 6
1. Nothing I didn't like. 2. No.	1. No. 2. There is nothing I don't like about the page –	n/a.	1. All is good. 2. No, it is all fine	1. No. 2. No. 3. I love the Bellum. Simon	1. No.

				and Lisa are fun cool people!	
	what's not to like??!! 3. No.		3. No.		

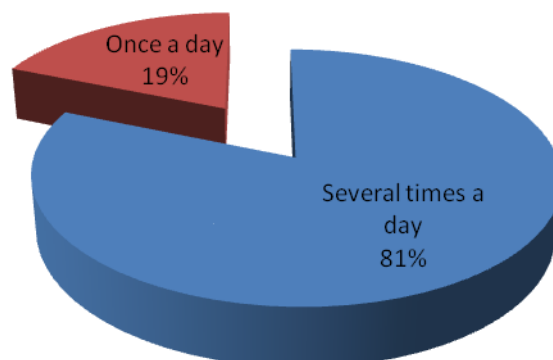| Respondents who are willing to be contacted					
Accommodation Provider 4	**Accommodation Provider 5**	**Accommodation Provider 7**	**Accommodation Provider 2**	**Accommodation Provider 8**	**Accommodation Provider 6 (**
Michael Carney 0402 323 689.	1. Justine (Jussy Liane on Facebook) 0439 099 169. 2. 0408 593 363 Michael	nataschavanthooft@planet.nl	Rosie 5482 2212.	Brett Mashado 0407 617 993. Karen Kemp 0409 685 861.	Sean and Danielle 0433 436 641.

Age group

51 and over 6%

18-35 38%

36-50 56%

Where are you from

International
6%

Other state
6%

Same state
88%

What is your gender

Male
44%

Female
56%

How often do you use Facebook

Once a day
19%

Several times a
day
81%
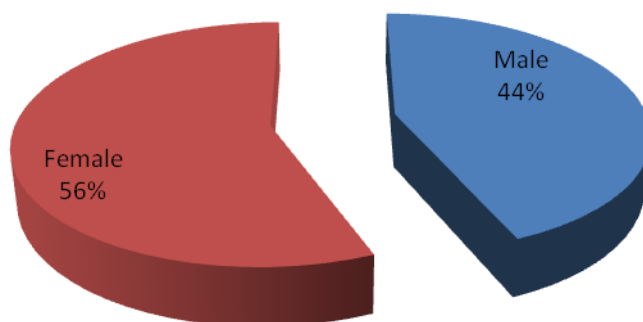
Appendix F: Facebook Comments Grouped Under the Sub-Themes

The tables below group all the relevant user comments from the examined STE Facebook pages in order to support the findings from the online questionnaires. The comments are grouped under the identified sub-themes that were presented in Chapter 6 – Thematic Analysis of User Responses to questionnaires.

All comments are from the 12 months prior to publishing the questionnaires. Mention of the STE names has been removed.

Theme 1: Expectations

Sub-Theme	Comments
Visitor Information: a theme that reflected the content that was published by the page administrators, both textual and visual.	1. What are tonight's special toppings??? You know, besides gravy, mushroom, Dianne, pepper, parmie, Hawaiian, creamy sundried, seeded mustard and all of those ones?? (AP 8). 1. Hi, me and my friend are thinking of coming over to Albany. We're in Perth at the moment; we've been told about your hostel and are thinking of staying here. But what is Albany like for jobs? Thanks (AP 6). 2. Hi guys, u got a bus on Friday night from bay? (AP 5). 3. Hi, I'm visiting Perth next week and plan to take a bus to Albany. Is there any 2–3 day tour to the wild land around? (AP 6). 4. What time is the actual event? We are hoping to arrive between 12 and 1 on Saturday (AP 6). 5. Hi, I got a question. Where about the table tennis is now in 1849 Backpacker? (AP 6). 6. Lovely photos. Can't wait to come and see for myself (AP 4). 7. Hi, just wondering if we can get an off-road tandem van thru to your place, will be coming from Uluru

	via the Mereenie loop (AP 7).
	8. I'm thinking of coming out for a couple of days sometime soon. Is there water in the river right now or is it dry? If not, is there a pool to cool off in? I've heard such wonderful things about your place and I'm looking forward to a short/sweet getaway! (AP 7).
	9. Do you sometimes still see the whales in early to mid December? (AP 5).
	10. What time you closing New Year's Eve to New Year? (AP 2).
Prizes: a theme that reflected the use of competitions as a leading content type by page administrators.	1. Thanks so much!!! Congrats to the other winners (** in response to a winning notification) (AP 2).
	2. Wow, a free night's accommodation in Merimbula. That would be awesome (AP 5).
	3. And I'd really like to win it as soon as possible! Will be a late honeymoon seeing I'm not going on one lol: D (AP 7).
	4. Thank you XXX! I received my lotto pack today. One of the tickets I had 3 numbers but no supp ... was fun checking them though ... thank you:) (AP 5).
	5. I've always wanted to go to Merimbula! It looks amazing from your posts!! (responding to a post about a new competition) (AP 5).
	6. Hello XXX Inn and thank you ... I just received the Lotto prize pack and near on had heart failure! Was doing the scratchy and I had 2 $20,000s. I kept scratching and another '2' came up; my heart was pumping, but no luck, lol! Oh, well, I'll keep my fingers crossed for the Lotto tickets! (AP 5).
	7. I have a problem XXX Inn. I am addicted to your Facebook page, liking everything I can see, sharing with all my friends, as I am desperate for a break,

	and would love to win the magical whale watching prize:) Do you provide counselling too? (AP 5).
	8. I'm really excited to learn there is whale watching at Merimbula. Only moved from Sunshine Coast Qld a few months ago, so getting to know southern states! I was only saying to friends yesterday that I would miss the whales this year, and XXX email popped into my inbox a few hours later with the whale watching comp! I have all my bits crossed that I am a winner! (AP 5).
Communication: a theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as a communication channel between the business and its guests, as well as between guests themselves.	1. Awesome work, well done. The XXX Hotel rocks (AP 8).
	2. Thanks to The XXX Hotel for having us last night to help us raise money for leukaemia:) The sumo's were so funny (AP 8).
	3. All the best guys, 10 years wow!!! Was there in '02, wish I was today. Got to be better than being in the Pilbara (AP 6).
	4. Thanks for making me feel less homesick, y'all! (AP 6).
	5. One of the best hostels I went to while travelling! !! (AP 6).
	6. Hi Amylee, You are single and I am single (AP 2).
	7. Wow, you guys have done an amazing job!!!!! (AP 6).
	8. We still feel sore not being able to watch any whales in action (AP 6).
	9. Your prophecy came true, Danny!!! When Delia woke up this morning, her first words weren't 'Good morning, Mum' but 'I want a pancake!!!!' So I did my very best :D but …' Mmmm, eatable but not as good as Danny's !' (AP 6).

	10. I want to wish all my dear friends at XXX Backpackers a Safe and Happy New Year. I wish each and every one of you love and happiness in 2012 (AP 6).
	11. We are on our way to Adelaide; might drop in on the way back lol (AP 4).
	12. G' day Jason and AJ! (AP 4).
	13. Well done to you all and congratulations (a user congratulates the STE for winning a tourism prize) (AP 7).
	14. What a lovely spot to stay – great views, great service and fabulous food and wine:) Thank you to all the staff for making us feel so welcome (AP 7).
	15. I've never been to the South Coast. It looks like a great place. Will have to come visit very soon I think. (AP 5).
	16. Great hotel and great owners – what's not to like? Best hotel in the Mount Gambier area (AP 8).
Bookings: a theme that reflected the use of the Facebook page as an e-commerce platform for the business, a way to increase revenue.	1. Hi there, I will be in Albany on Nov 11th. If I want to book a room for 3 persons, which room should I book? I read reviews on Trip Advisor on your place. It's very promising (AP 6).
	2. We are definitely coming back for another visit. Looks like July of 2011. I see by the website you have a/c but do you have heating as well? Winter can be cold (AP 4).
	3. Might have to come back from an earlier than scheduled visit with such a great temptation on offer (** in response to a coupon posted on the page) (AP 5).
	4. What's the difference between the packages? Might be that I'm reading it wrong, but they seem the same … other than the price? (AP 7).

	5. Cheap at half the price ... Great deal, so come on down to Merimbula town (responding to a post from the STE promoting a new deal) (AP 5).
	6. With the family suite, could you fit 2 adults and a 5, 4 and 2 year old in there? (AP 5).
	7. I am thinking of staying here on Jan 11th for one night. Do we have to book and I need 2 beds. Can I have a price (AP 5).

Theme 2: Value and Benefits

Sub-Theme	Comments
Entertainment: reflects the usage of the Facebook page as a source for online amusement and fun (hedonic benefits).	2. LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE LIKE !!!!!! (** in response to a message the page has posted about a new competition) (AP 5)
	3. Oh, that is just a beautiful photo! (AP 5).
	4. Pssss Delia! You're going to get a flight back here once it's done so you can dance on the stage in your lederhosen!!!/Is that a one direction promo shot?/ Hahahaha I'm gonna get you guys some lederhosen so you can dance on it (** users joke with each other following a post from the STE about a new stage being built for guests to enjoy) (AP 6).
	5. My first laugh of the day – Thank you (in response to a funny photo the page has posted) (AP 6).
	6. It actually kinda looks like you're sneaking up behind him with a hammer … (in response to a humorous photo the STE has posted) (AP 4).
	7. Lovely picture, lovely view, beautiful animal! (in response to a kangaroo photo that the STE has posted) (AP 4).
	8. Geez ... Look at them all!! ... Too awesome!! ... (responding to a photo of birds on a tree near the

	STE) (AP 7).
	9. Awesome singer. I listen to his song FREE, every night (responding to a photo of a singer who visits the STE) (AP 2).
	10. Simon would look slimmer with one on!! Lol (responding to an update about a sumo event at the STE, suggesting that the manager might not need a sumo costume) (AP 8).
	11. The resemblance is undeniable. The mannerisms are identical. Fat Yak must be named EDWARD (responding to a photo of a yak the STE has posted, urging fans to suggest a name that will suit him) (AP 8).
Knowledge Creation: reflects the usage of the Facebook page as a source for knowledge and news about the STE and its services (functional benefits).	1. How do you get to this spot? (** asked in relation to a photo posted by the page) (AP 5).
	2. Does that mean the whole loop from Halls Gap to Venus Baths to The Pinnacle is open? (in response to a message the page has posted about a walking track being re-opened) STE responded: *'No – unfortunately it is still closed from Venus Baths to the Pinnacle – but you can still get to the Pinnacle from Halls Gap'* (AP 4).
	3. I usually check the observations of Mt William on the BOM's website, to see if it's below zero. You are close but the mount is another 43 m higher (a user is sharing information in response to a post about walking conditions on a nearby track) (AP 4).
	4. That's horrible! Poor little thing (in response to a message the STE has posted about how litter kills; the post was accompanied with a photo of an animal who died because of tourists' litter) (AP 7).
	5. Sounds incredible ... especially looking forward to being there on New Year's Eve xx (responding to a

	message about the flora in the region after the heavy rain) (AP 7).
	6. Bloody hell, I thought Rob and I had done the Organ Pipes – no pun intended – so we have spent days on that beach , not realising what was around the corner???? (in response to a photo the STE has posted of a local nature attraction called the Organ Pipes) (AP 7).
	7. They are just as curious of humans as we are of them, lucky people on board; I've never seen nor heard of whales breaching like that, they must have been very happy ... Spectacular (in response to a video and photos of a whale watching tour that the STE has posted) (AP 5).
	8. I have lived on a beach for most of my life, and never knew these little babies existed! They are gorgeous ... (responding to a post about a unique fish species) (AP 5).
	9. Is this in Harvey Bay? Either way it looks gorgeous (in response to a photo the STE has posted) (AP 2).
Memories: reflects the usage of the Facebook page in order to revive holiday memories and experiences.	1. Albany is in my mind the most beautiful place in Australia (AP 6).
	2. Thank you very much for everything, I really enjoyed my stay in your hostel!:) hope to see you again anytime (AP 6).
	3. Thank you for a lovely escape!:) Looking forward to next time already! Xx (AP 7).
	4. I did a 4-month motorbike trip around most of Australia and your hostel was the friendliest one I stayed in (AP 6).
	5. I miss this kitchen! I want to go back (in response to a photo of the communal kitchen in the STE) (AP 6).
	6. Another visit WAY in order. Miss you guys! (AP 4).

	7. Great photos! Can't wait to return – it's the sort of place that draws you back! (AP 4).
	8. Wish I could sit there and enjoy watching it and go for a swim a bit to the left. Loved the spring (responding to a photo of a natural spring near the STE) (AP 7).
	9. I recognise this ridge Shelagh! Hope you had a wonderful climb. It's a magic part of the world. I noticed that the vegetation has grown since Karen and I were there last. Very green indeed. Take care (AP 7).
	10. Miss Merimbula ... this motel has style, class and grace, friendly caring staff and the rooms are so cosy (AP 5).
	11. We had a great time at your place, thanks a lot! Greetings to the chef! (including this photo).
Sharing: reflects the usage of the Facebook page as a social positioning platform in which the content items that I share with my friends tell a story about my identity (social benefits).	1. Only 100 to go!! Thanks for sharing the love everyone – keep up the great work! (** this post was shared 12 times) (AP 5). 2. 112 to go 'til we reach 2000 … getting closer each day ... can we draw the Whale Watching Package prize this week ...??! (** this post was shared 13 times) (AP 5). 3. How funny but how true! LOL.

4. (** this photo was shared 12 times) (AP 5).

5. After almost a year of travelling and experiencing many a hostel I have to say this place is quite possibly the most pleasant, cleanest, beautiful and enjoyable hostel I have stayed in so far. Thoroughly enjoying our stay and just wish it could be longer! Thank you! (AP 4).

6. (** this photo was shared 5 times) (AP 7).

Accommodation Provider	Total number of user posts and comments in 2012.	Relevant comments that were used in the study (i.e. more than a single-word comment, not repetitive, related to a sub theme).
AP 2	93	5

AP 4	84	11
AP 5	500+	23
AP 6	321	15
AP 7	81	13
AP 8	186	6
TOTAL	**1265**	**73**

Appendix G: Coding the user responses

Question 1: Why did you 'like' this page to become a fan?

S = Stayed there: the respondent has either stayed at the business, intends to stay there or (if it is a pub hotel) visited the place/goes there regularly. **14 times**

K = Keep in touch: the respondent wishes to stay connected to the business's owners and staff. **1 time**

I = Information: the respondent wants to know more about the business, special events, special rates that are being offered, live gigs (in case it is a pub hotel) and so on. **6 times**

C = Competitions: the respondent enjoys participating in competitions that the page is running for a chance to win a prize. **3 times**

P = Personal: the respondent has a personal connection to the business (worked there, etc.). **1 time**

Question 2: Why do you think the (accommodation provider) has created this Facebook page?

R = Reach: the respondent believes that the business wants to reach new and bigger audiences as part of its sales efforts. **2 times**

P = Promotion: using the page to promote the business and its services. A form of advertising (both 'traditional' advertising and word of mouth). **10 times**

B = Bookings: using the page to increase revenue. **3 times**

C = Communication: using the page as a platform for guests to talk with one another (stay in touch, etc.), but also for the business to stay in touch with its past, future and current clients. **4 times**

I = Information: using the page to tell more about the business, notify about special events, special rates that are being offered, live gigs (in case it is a pub hotel) and so on. **5 times**

U = Up to date: creating the page to stay up to date with the current social media trend. **3 times**

Question 3: What are the main 2–3 things that you feel this page has given you?

I = Information: the page informed the users about all sorts of things related to the business (e.g. information about the region, upcoming events, new menus, special rates, etc.). **16 times**

E = Entertainment: the page entertained the users via its posts and photos. Users found the page fun to visit thanks to its content. **9 times**

M = Memories: the page revived holiday memories from staying at the hotel. **1 time**

F = Feedback: the page provided effective feedback to users' questions/comments. **1 time**

Did you share or are you interested in sharing items from this page with your friends on Facebook? Why are you sharing/not sharing these items?

Share: 17

Does not share: 3

C = Content: sharing content from the page as photos and articles

P = Prizes: sharing posts about competitions in an effort to win a prize (the more you share the better your winning chances are)

W = Word of mouth: sharing the page to recommend the business to friends and family

Do you believe you could use this page as a tourist guide if visiting the region? Will it be informative enough for your needs? (If not, please explain why)

No = 6 (lack of information about the region; too focused on hotel life; no suggested itineraries)

Yes = 8

Not sure: 2

Are you interested in following this page just for entertainment, even without planning to stay at the hostel? Explain your answer.

Yes = 13 (though some users live nearby the hotel, so this question was irrelevant to them as they mainly visit the business for a night out)

No = 3

Are you satisfied with the content published on the page? (Content relates to text, photos and videos). What do you like (or don't like) about the content?

All respondents but one stated that they are satisfied with the content on the page. Some, however, mentioned that they would be even more satisfied with additional special deals (accommodation and/or food). Competitions seemed to be the main type of content that users loved.

Did you find the page fun and interesting to visit? What did you like about it? What do you think can make it better?

All users but one found the page to be interesting and fun to use. Most couldn't think of things that could improve it. Top things to like about the page were the photos and the constant updates. One user mentioned how he liked the non-pushy way that the business promotes itself. **Things to improve:** more information about special food requests (gluten-free, etc.), more photos, more info about the region and also more interaction.

Was there anything that you didn't like about the page? What was it and why didn't you like it?

All respondents stated that there is nothing they did not like about the page. Their answers demonstrate strong support of the business, almost a blind support. They are literally 'fans' of the business.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age: most respondents belong to the older age group of 36–50, with the 18–35 group coming second.

Location: most respondents (88%) live in the same state where the business is (and some even in the same town). This might indicate that they would be more supportive towards the business as it is a part of their community and they want it to succeed.

Gender: more female than male.

Facebook usage: majority use FB several times a day (81%), which indicates that they are users who are familiar with the platform and probably follow other brand pages. They know what they appreciate about pages on FB and what makes them bored about it.

Appendix H: Ethics Approval 1 + 2

Ethics approval 1 – for interviews with STEs:

From: Christine Near **On Behalf Of** BL Ethics
Sent: Friday, 15 April 2011 at 3:49 PM
To: Carmine Sellitto
Subject: RE: Ethics Application HRETH 11/52

Dear Dr Sellitto

Thank you for submitting the revised ethics application.

HRETH 11/52   Social Media Implementation by Australian SMTEs: Business Requirements and User Perceptions

The Chair of the Business and Law Human Research Ethics Committee has reviewed the application and resolved to **approve** it. Please find the approval memo attached.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Christine Near

Ethics approval 2 – for online questionnaire:

TO	Dr Carmine Sellitto Management and Information Systems Victoria University	DATE	28/8/2012
FROM	Dr Nick Billington Chair Faculty of Business and Law Human Research Ethics Committee		

SUBJECT   Ethics Application – HRETH 12/216

Dear Dr Sellitto

Thank you for resubmitting your application for ethical approval of the project entitled:

HRETH 12/216 – Social Media Implementation by Australian Accommodation Small Tourism Enterprises: Business Requirements and User Perceptions
(BLHREC 12/94)

The proposed research project has been accepted and deemed to meet the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) 'National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)', by the Secretary of the Business & Law Human Research Ethics Committee. Approval has been granted from 28th August 2012 to 27th August 2014.

Continued approval of this research project by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (VUHREC) is conditional upon the provision of a report within 12 months of the above approval date (by **28th August 2013**) or upon the completion of the project (if earlier). A report proforma may be downloaded from the VUHREC web site at: http://research.vu.edu.au/hrec.php

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious events or adverse and/or unforeseen events that may affect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes. Researchers are also reminded of the need to notify the approving HREC of changes to personnel in research projects via a request for a minor amendment.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Kind Regards,

Dr Nick Billington

Chair

Faculty of Business and Law Human Research Ethics Committee