

# Strategic Use of Social Media in Cypriot Urban Hotels: Trends, Practices, HRM Implications and Competitive Advantages

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**Abstract:** The increasing incorporation of social media within the global hospitality sector has revolutionised organisational communication, marketing strategies, service provision, and Human Resource Management (HRM). In the competitive landscape of Cypriot urban hotels catering to international tourists, business travellers, and local visitors, social media serves as a strategic instrument that impacts guest decision-making, reputation management, and internal operating procedures. Drawing on an interpretivist qualitative framework and informed by social media engagement theory and electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) literature this study examines the strategic utilisation of social media in Cypriot urban hotels. Semi-structured interviews with HR managers, employees, and consumers were performed to reveal the interpretive meanings, organisational routines, and contextual realities influencing digital activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 44 participants, including 8 HR managers, 16 hotel employees, and 20 hotel customers operating in urban hotels across Cyprus. Data were analysed using thematic analysis supported by NVivo software, following the six-phase approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Credibility and validity were ensured through triangulation across stakeholder groups, data sources, and iterative theme refinement. The results demonstrate six interrelated themes that highlight the growing organisational significance of social media. Social networks serve as extensions of hotel identity and experience branding, visibly influencing guest expectations before arrival (Lund, et al., 2018). Secondly, real-time digital responsiveness has emerged as a vital factor of service quality, with timely online interactions affecting customer happiness and confidence (Kim and Kim, 2022). Third, the increasing organisational importance of social media has necessitated greater involvement from HRM, including the development of digital competencies, behavioural protocols, and employee confidence in online communication (Papademetriou et al., 2023a; Papademetriou et al., 2023b). Fourth, social media enhances corporate branding and talent acquisition by highlighting workplace culture and employee contributions (Kilson, 2025; Azhar, et al., 2024). The study identifies governance issues, such as inadequate digital literacy, lack of codified policies, and uneven interdepartmental cooperation (Magalhães, et al., 2022). Ultimately, planned and well-regulated social media utilisation fosters competitive advantage by improving visibility, distinction, and consumer loyalty. The study advances theoretical understanding of social media as a cross-functional organisational resource and provides actionable guidance for hospitality managers seeking to enhance digital governance, workforce capability, and strategic positioning in competitive urban markets.

**Keywords:** Social Media Strategy, Digital Customer Engagement, HRM Integration, Employer Branding, Competitive Advantage, Interpretivist Research, Thematic Analysis, NVivo

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## 1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has experienced significant development in the last decade, primarily due to the rise of digital technologies, with social media serving as a key catalyst for change (Leung et al., 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As international visitors increasingly depend on digital platforms for information acquisition, accommodation comparison, and service quality assessment, hotels have been compelled to modify their communication strategies and operational frameworks to align with evolving expectations (Leung et al., 2013; Pereira and Freitas, 2023). Social media has evolved into a crucial tool for generating visibility, influencing attitudes, and promoting interaction. The immediacy and interactivity of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and TripAdvisor have transformed hotel marketing strategies while introducing novel competition, customer empowerment, and organisational transparency (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Morelos-Gómez, et al., 2024; Shuvo, et al., 2024). The urban hospitality subsector encounters heightened challenges stemming from the concentration of competing establishments and the varied characteristics of customers, who frequently depend on digital tools for travel decision-making (Papademetriou et al., 2023a).

Cyprus, a historically prominent Mediterranean tourism destination, embodies these worldwide trends in a concentrated manner. Urban hotels in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos cater to leisure tourists as well as business visitors, expats, students, and regional professionals, all of whom have significant digital involvement. These guest groups often use social media to investigate lodging alternatives, examine visual depictions of hotel encounters, peruse reviews, and evaluate service quality prior to making reservations (Papademetriou et al.,

2022). Thus, urban hotels in Cyprus function within a competitive digital landscape where proactive online interaction is crucial for sustaining visibility, relevance, and differentiation.

Social media has evolved beyond a marketing tool to play a broader organisational role in internal communication, learning, and HRM, with boundaries between internal and external communication increasingly blurred (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2016; Tkalac Verčič et al., 2024; Wuersch et al., 2024). Employees now feature in promotional content, interact with online reviews, and help shape digital representations of organisational culture. Consequently, HRM must address digital recruitment, employer branding, behavioural norms, training, and reputational risk, signalling a shift towards more integrated social media strategies in hospitality. Despite this importance, qualitative research on social media practices in Cypriot hotels remains limited. Existing studies largely adopt quantitative approaches focused on HRM, service quality, and performance (Papademetriou et al., 2022; Papademetriou et al., 2023a; Papademetriou et al., 2023b), offering structural insights but overlooking lived experiences, contextual meanings, and social dynamics. Qualitative research enables deeper examination of how social media is interpreted, shaped by organisational culture, and enacted in everyday hotel operations (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020).

Cyprus provides a valuable yet underexplored context for this analysis due to its economic reliance on tourism, high digital adoption, and concentration of small and medium urban hotels operating in highly visible markets. Urban hotels face constant reputational scrutiny through online reviews and visual content, making social media central to consumer decision-making. This study addresses a clear gap by offering context-specific qualitative insights into social media use in Cypriot hospitality. This research seeks to fill this void by conducting a qualitative analysis of social media practices in urban hotels in Cyprus. The study aims to investigate the strategic utilisation of social media within these organisations, explore its intersection with HRM practices, identify challenges and opportunities related to digital engagement, and analyse its contribution to competitive differentiation and organisational performance. The study offers a comprehensive and contextually grounded analysis of social media's function in contemporary Cypriot urban hospitality through semi-structured interviews with HR managers, hotel staff, and consumers.

## **2. Literature Review**

This research is based on three interrelated theoretical frameworks: social media engagement theory, electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM), and interpretivist organisational theory. The idea of social media engagement conceptualises digital contact as a multifaceted construct that includes cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements (Harrigan et al., 2017), offering an appropriate framework for comprehending guest-hotel interactions in digital contexts. The e-HRM theory elucidates the transformation of HRM roles, governance mechanisms, and employee management practices through digital technology (Bondarouk & Brewster, 2016), facilitating the examination of HR's engagement in social media strategy, behavioural regulation, and the advancement of digital capabilities. Interpretivist organisational theory (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014) asserts that digital technologies derive significance from social interactions and routine organisational practices. This study enhances theory by demonstrating how social media functions as a multifaceted strategic resource that concurrently influences branding, service delivery, human resource management practices, and competitive advantage in urban hospitality environments.

Social media has emerged as a crucial component of modern hospitality strategy, serving as an influential channel for communication, branding, and client engagement. Previous research underscores its ability to foster emotional connection, promote interactive discourse, and harness user-generated content, so augmenting brand credibility and reinforcing consumer relationships (Leung et al., 2013; Pateli et al., 2020). Hotels utilise social media channels not only to promote services but also to create and convey experiential narratives. Visual material, especially, significantly influences traveler opinions, since meticulously selected photographs and videos provide prospective visitors with a glimpse of the hotel experience (Pitanatri, et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024). The strategic significance of social media is underscored by its integrative capabilities, including analytics tools that facilitate real-time assessment of customer sentiment, swift distribution of promotional content, and the capacity to modify digital strategies in reaction to evolving trends (Buhalis and Foerste, 2015).

Customer involvement is a fundamental aspect of digital hospitality strategy. Engagement is defined as comprising cognitive, emotional, and behavioural elements, including acts like commenting, sharing, liking, reviewing, and participating in online communities (Harrigan et al., 2017; Jain et al., 2017). Engagement extends beyond transient interactions; it significantly impacts customer loyalty and decision-making. User-generated content, such as reviews and personal photographs, has emerged as a vital source of social evidence that

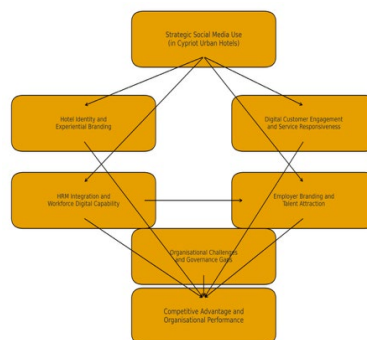
influences consumer perceptions (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010). The responsiveness of hotels to client enquiries and complaints on social media enhances views of professionalism, empathy, and reliability (Papademetriou et al., 2023a; Taraza et al., 2023). Research demonstrates that timely and tailored answers improve satisfaction and help alleviate adverse perceptions resulting from service failures (Zahoor and Khan, 2022; Honora et al., 2022). Social media serves as a crucial extension of the service environment, merging the distinctions between digital and in-person hospitality interactions.

The convergence of social media and human resource management has garnered heightened academic interest, especially as digital technologies transform recruiting, selection, performance communication, and employee engagement (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2016). In hospitality businesses, HRM must address new duties, including the formulation of digital conduct norms, educating employees in online communication, and incorporating staff engagement into branding plans (Alqarni and Agina 2023; Ragazou et al., 2023; Papademetriou et al., 2023). Social media has emerged as a crucial instrument for employer branding, allowing organisations to convey their values, workplace culture, and professionalism to prospective candidates. Research indicates that a robust digital employer brand can recruit superior applicants (Siakalli et al., 2023; Papademetriou et al., 2023), enhance employee pride, and affect retention rates (Chhabra and Sharma, 2014). Nonetheless, social media poses hazards related to reputational harm, violations of professionalism, and indistinct boundaries between personal and professional identities. These challenges require strong governance frameworks and HRM supervision to maintain consistency and safeguard the company reputation (Kumar and Gupta, 2023).

The governance issues associated with social media are exacerbated by the significant visibility and transparency inherent in the hospitality sector. Hotels encounter the continual threat of adverse reviews, viral material, and public grievances that can disseminate swiftly across platforms. In the absence of explicit regulations governing communication protocols, content approval, and staff participation, companies may find it challenging to uphold consistency in messaging or to respond adeptly to digital crises. The hotel industry necessitates meticulously designed frameworks that encompass ethical considerations, privacy issues, communication protocols, and employee obligations.

The significance of social media in creating competitive advantage has been thoroughly emphasised in the literature. Strategic digital interaction enables hotels to distinguish themselves, elevate brand awareness, bolster client loyalty, and swiftly adjust to market fluctuations (Manyanga et al., 2024; Papademetriou et al., 2023). Analytics-driven methodologies empower organisations to customise campaigns, discern client segments, and react to behavioural patterns instantaneously. In urban hotels, effectively conveying distinctive features, such as location-based benefits or speciality experiences, is crucial in highly competitive marketplaces. Robust social media performance correlates with increased booking rates, elevated occupancy during off-peak times, and augmented client lifetime value. The accumulated evidence indicates the strategic imperative of social media in modern hotel management, especially in markets where visibility, responsiveness, and customer experience are crucial for competitive success.

This study proposes a conceptual model that illustrates the relationships between strategic social media utilisation and its organisational outcomes in Cypriot urban hotels, based on the theoretical foundations discussed, including literature on social media engagement, HRM integration, employer branding, and digital governance. The model integrates the six identified thematic dimensions, illustrating the mechanisms by which social media facilitates hotel identity development, digital customer engagement, HRM alignment, talent acquisition, and competitive performance, while recognising the moderating effect of organisational challenges. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

The approach centres on the strategic utilisation of social media in Cypriot urban hotels, serving as the primary driving construct. The strategic application of social media content influences hotel identity and experience branding by visually and narratively conveying the hotel's character, values, and positioning. Simultaneously, it enhances digital customer engagement and service responsiveness, as platforms facilitate guest interactions, address enquiries, monitor reviews, and provide real-time digital service. Strategic utilisation of social media enhances HRM integration and workforce digital proficiency: HR departments engage in formulating digital conduct standards, educating personnel, and synchronising internal practices with external communications. Social media enhances employer branding and talent acquisition through HRM processes by projecting the hotel's culture and employment value proposition to the labour market.

All four mid-level constructs—hotel identity and experiential branding, digital customer engagement and responsiveness, HRM integration and workforce digital capability, and employer branding and talent attraction—enhance competitive advantage and organisational performance, as evidenced by differentiation, reputation, customer loyalty, and occupancy rates. Organisational problems and governance deficiencies, including the lack of formal policies, inadequate digital literacy, and fragmented coordination, impede the relationship between these structures and competitive advantage, so shaping, constraining, or diminishing the beneficial effects of social media practices on performance. The integration of HRM and digital workforce capabilities directly impacts employer branding and talent attraction, suggesting that HRM's management of digital skills and protocols affects the hotel's appeal as an employer.

This configuration delineates the six principal thematic domains derived from your findings and illustrates their causal interconnections, with strategic social media utilisation as the genesis, various mediating organisational processes, and competitive advantage as the final outcome, moderated by governance and implementation obstacles.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted an interpretivist qualitative approach to explore meanings, experiences, and organisational processes surrounding social media use in urban hotels in Cyprus. The interpretivist paradigm views organisational reality as socially constructed through interaction and interpretation, making it well suited to examining digital communication shaped by human judgement, culture, and context (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Accordingly, social media was treated as a socially embedded practice rather than a purely technical tool, aligning with Orlikowski and Scott (2014). A qualitative design enabled in-depth insight into participants' lived experiences, which quantitative surveys could not capture, particularly tacit knowledge, organisational tensions, and subjective perceptions of digital engagement. Semi-structured interviews were therefore used to balance predefined themes with participants' own perspectives.

Purposeful sampling targeted individuals directly involved in or affected by hotel social media practices, reflecting prior Cypriot research categories while enhancing qualitative depth (Papademetriou et al., 2023a; Papademetriou et al., 2023b). The sample included eight HR managers from urban hotels in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos; sixteen staff from diverse departments; and twenty customers actively engaged with hotel-related social media.

**Table 1: Participants**

Participant Group	Number	Context
HR Managers	8	Urban hotels (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos)
Hotel Employees	16	Front office, marketing, F&B, housekeeping, guest relations
Customers	20	Domestic and international

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting 35–60 minutes, guided by themes including social media strategy, customer engagement, HRM involvement, employee digital skills, online reviews, organisational challenges, and competitive advantage. Interviews were conducted in English or Greek, audio-recorded with consent, and complemented by triangulation through observation of hotels' public social media platforms and, where available, internal HRM materials related to digital communication. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, involving familiarisation, coding, theme

development, review, and refinement. NVivo software supported systematic coding and comparison. Themes were refined through iterative analysis, cross-stakeholder validation, and interpretive reflection. Rigour was ensured through data source, methodological, and analytical triangulation, aligning with established qualitative standards for credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Trustworthiness was further strengthened through participant diversity, detailed contextual description, transparent analytic procedures, and reflexive journaling. Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection, with confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation assured. All data were securely stored, and pseudonyms were used throughout.

#### **4. Findings and Discussion**

The data analysis identified six predominant themes that jointly illustrate the strategic utilisation and usage of social media in Cypriot urban hotels. The initial subject, social media as an extension of hotel identity and experiential branding, illustrates how management and staff use digital platforms as tools for visually and narratively conveying the hotel's character, values, and competitive stance. Human Resources managers sometimes characterise social media as a "digital shopfront" or "digital lobby," highlighting its significance in shaping initial impressions of guests. Employees emphasised the significance of high-quality visual storytelling, asserting that meticulously selected photos and videos act as emblematic representations of the hotel's style and service philosophy. Customers said that they frequently interacted with the hotel's social media material before making a reservation, utilising these digital signals to assess ambiance, professionalism, and cleanliness. Recent studies corroborate this by demonstrating that visual storytelling on platforms such as Instagram directly influences perceived brand value and fosters emotional connection. (Lund et al., 2018; Pitanatri et al., 2024; Silva et al., 2024; Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The second theme pertains to digital interaction and real-time responsiveness, seen as a crucial factor influencing perceived service quality. All participants concurred that reaction time on digital sites including Instagram, Facebook, and TripAdvisor significantly impacted customer satisfaction. Customers anticipated prompt and compassionate responses, perceiving delays as indicative of inadequate service — a viewpoint supported by recent research connecting social responsiveness to brand trust and loyalty. (Honora et al., 2022; Kim & Kim, 2022). Employees affirmed that replying to messages had become a fundamental aspect of their responsibilities and recounted situations where social media enquiries were resolved more swiftly than in-person front-desk requests. Numerous HR managers acknowledged that social media responsiveness has become crucial in-service recovery, noting that online complaints often reach management prior to formal channels. Consequently, personnel progressively transitioned from reactive to proactive digital interaction, recognising the necessity for tailored and empathic communication to bolster client trust and emotional connection.

The third theme pertains to the integration of HRM and the digital competencies of the workforce. Human Resource managers characterised their changing job as digital overseers tasked with formulating regulations, assessing employee behaviour on social media, and enhancing internal capabilities. Many saw the lack of codified social media rules and digital training, a deficiency recognised as a significant weakness in recent studies on digital HR governance (Kumar & Gupta, 2023; Alqarni & Agina, 2023). Notwithstanding this obligation, numerous individuals recognised the lack of established social media strategies, observing that expectations were frequently conveyed informally. Employees often articulated ambiguity around the parameters of acceptable internet conduct. Numerous individuals expressed unease when addressing unfavourable reviews or participating in promotional content creation without adequate training. Human Resources managers identified a distinct deficiency in digital competencies and said that the absence of organised training heightened the danger of reputational damage. The emotional labour required to sustain a consistently good online identity was emphasised, indicating that digital engagement amplifies the typically challenging interpersonal aspects of hospitality job.

The fourth theme emphasises employer branding and talent acquisition. Human Resources management regarded social media as a means of conveying organisational culture and augmenting the hotel's appeal as an employment destination. Hotels sought to convey an impression of a supportive and active work environment by sharing behind-the-scenes content, employee accomplishments, and team-building events. Employees expressed that being highlighted in such posts made them feel appreciated and regarded them as acknowledgement of their contributions. Customers perceived staff-centered material favourably, interpreting it as an indication of ethical and employee-focused management. Human Resources professionals added that social media has emerged as a potent recruitment avenue, especially for enticing younger candidates with

robust digital proficiency. This amalgamation of recruitment and brand representation exemplifies how social media obscures the distinction between external marketing and internal human resource management activities.

The fifth subject pertains to organisational problems and governance deficiencies. Although acknowledging the strategic significance of social media, numerous hotels had difficulties in establishing formal governance frameworks. Human Resource managers identified resource limitations, insufficient experience, and conflicting departmental agendas as obstacles to formulating comprehensive social media strategies. Employees identified challenges in reconciling authenticity with brand consistency, especially when interacting with user-generated content or addressing emotionally charged guest complaints. Numerous participants regarded the handling of adverse online reviews as a taxing and time-intensive obligation. Hotels encountered difficulties in maintaining regular posting schedules, primarily due to restricted personnel availability and the lack of assigned social media positions. The governance deficiencies engendered ambiguity, role conflict, and inconsistencies in organisational communication.

The last theme, competitive advantage via strategic digital presence, illustrates how social media enhances visibility, distinction, and performance. Human Resources managers and staff concurred that digital material captivated both international and domestic audiences, hence impacting guest decision-making. Post-pandemic research indicate that customers choose hotels with dynamic social profiles, correlating digital strategy with booking behaviours and brand loyalty (Manyanga et al., 2024; Morelos-Gómez et al., 2024; Shuvo et al., 2024). Social media analytics empowered managers to swiftly adjust promotional methods, react to market developments, and get insights into customer preferences. Participants said that robust digital engagement enhanced occupancy during low-demand periods and fostered long-term loyalty by strengthening emotional bonds with guests.

The aforementioned findings indicate that social media has evolved into a strategic and cross-functional tool for Cypriot urban hotels, mirroring wider developments in the worldwide hospitality sector. Social media has evolved from only a promotional tool to a fundamental element of corporate communication, service delivery, and human resource management practices. This corresponds with the literature highlighting the strategic significance of digital tools in influencing brand identity, visitor engagement, and organisational performance (Leung et al., 2013; Hudson and Thal, 2013; Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019). The concept of social media as an extension of hotel identity reinforces the notion that digital platforms function as symbolic arenas where businesses craft narratives that shape guest perceptions prior to actual service interactions. In this context, social media serves as a platform for experiential branding, enabling hotels to showcase values, aesthetics, and cultural characteristics that would otherwise be challenging to communicate.

The significance of responsiveness as a crucial service characteristic highlights the increasingly hybrid character of hospitality, wherein digital interactions are essential to the client experience. This aligns with Harrigan et al.'s (2017) conceptualisation of digital engagement as a catalyst for satisfaction and trust, indicating that emotional reactivity and personalised communication substantially influence guests' assessment of service quality. The results demonstrate that online service recovery is crucial for preserving brand reputation, corroborating other studies that link digital responsiveness to perceived reliability, empathy, and organisational competence (Zahoor and Khan, 2022). The transition to real-time digital service engagements signifies a change in the way hospitality professionals perceive service.

The results about the evolving role of HRM highlight the necessity of incorporating HRM skills into digital communication initiatives. In this study, HR managers are integral to defining behavioural expectations, cultivating digital capabilities, and mitigating reputational risk, hence reinforcing Bondarouk and Brewster's (2016) claim that HRM is increasingly crucial in digital transformation initiatives. Employees' reports of a digital skills gap indicate a necessity for organised training programs that encompass both the technical facets of social media and the interpersonal and emotional efforts required to sustain a refined digital identity. The findings demonstrate that digital involvement introduces additional dimensions of cognitive and emotional labour to hospitality positions, hence expanding Hartline and Jones's (1996) observations on employee performance into digital environments.

The importance of employer branding in influencing external views of organisational culture is extensively substantiated by current literature. The presence of staff on social media bolsters the credibility of hotel narratives and increases the hotel's appeal to prospective candidates. This aligns with Chhabra and Sharma's (2014) results about the impact of employer branding in competitive labour markets, especially in service industries marked by high turnover rates. The dual role of social media as a marketing and recruitment

instrument illustrates the growing convergence of HRM and marketing responsibilities, reinforcing modern assertions for integrated communication strategies.

The study's findings suggest that Cypriot urban hotels could gain from formal governance frameworks that delineate roles, establish communication norms, and facilitate proactive management of digital interactions. The lack of such frameworks generates risks that may affect brand integrity and organisational cohesion.

The study's findings substantiate the assertion that strategic digital integration augments competitive advantage. The capacity to utilise analytics for precise communication, customise digital narratives for distinct market segments, and cultivate emotional bonds through personalised interaction corresponds with extensive research on digital hospitality strategy. Urban hotels in congested and prominent markets find social media to provide avenues for market adaptability and enduring distinction. Authentic storytelling and active involvement foster emotional resonance, hence enhancing loyalty and aligning with the service-profit chain model (Sasser et al., 1997) by connecting digital satisfaction to behavioural intents and performance results.

## **5. Theoretical and Managerial Implications**

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

This study enhances the literature on hospitality and digital management by broadening social media engagement theory to encompass employee involvement, HRM governance, and the formation of organisational identity. This research enhances e-HRM theory by experimentally illustrating the role of HR departments as digital gatekeepers tasked with regulating online conduct, cultivating workforce digital competencies, and alleviating reputational risk. Moreover, the findings substantiate interpretivist viewpoints by demonstrating that social media activities are socially produced through organisational routines, norms, and power dynamics, rather than being solely technology products.

### **5.2 Managerial Implications**

The findings underscore the imperative for formal social media governance frameworks that delineate responsibilities, behavioural expectations, and reaction protocols from a managerial standpoint. Urban hotels ought to allocate resources towards comprehensive digital training initiatives for frontline staff and HR management, emphasising both technical competencies and emotional labour, as well as online service recovery strategies. Practices within the industry, like HR-managed content clearance protocols, specialised social media response teams, and analytics-informed campaign strategies, can improve brand consistency and responsiveness. Furthermore, utilising employee-focused material can enhance employer branding and recruit talent, especially among digitally native prospects, while also promoting internal engagement and pride.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study enhances the understanding of the strategic significance of social media in Cypriot urban hotels by elucidating the complex and interrelated effects of digital platforms on organisational communication, human resource management practices, customer engagement, and competitive advantage. The study illustrates that social media has become a crucial component of company identification and service provision, influencing visitor expectations and experiences across the customer journey. It further emphasises that HRM is crucial in digital governance by establishing behavioural protocols, enhancing staff competencies, and facilitating cohesive communication tactics. The incorporation of digital tools into HRM operations has ramifications for recruiting, employee engagement, and organisational culture, demonstrating the convergence of marketing and HRM responsibilities inside digital environments. While social media offers numerous benefits, the study also highlights considerable problems, such as the lack of institutional governance frameworks, insufficient staff training, and the emotional strains linked to digital interaction. These problems highlight the necessity for more integrated and strategically governed frameworks that facilitate sustained digital transformation (Taraza et al., 2023; Papademetriou et al., 2023). Cypriot urban hotels aiming to enhance their competitive advantage must strategically invest in digital capabilities, implement HRM policies, and ensure cross-departmental collaboration. The research recognises multiple limitations. This qualitative study's conclusions represent the viewpoints of a particular group of stakeholders and cannot be generalised to all hotel categories or geographic areas. The emphasis on urban hotels overlooks the potentially unique dynamics seen in resort or rural environments. Moreover, the dependence on interview data implies that observational or behavioural dimensions of digital involvement may remain inadequately documented. Subsequent research may rectify these limitations by

utilising mixed-method or longitudinal designs, investigating variances among hotel categories, or assessing the influence of upcoming technology like as artificial intelligence and automated digital services. The study offers a thorough and contextually relevant analysis of social media practices in urban hotels in Cyprus. It enhances both theoretical and practical comprehension by amalgamating concepts from hospitality management, human resource management, and digital communication, providing a basis for ongoing academic exploration and industrial innovation.

Ethics declaration: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Neapolis University Pafos (pro-protocol code: 2023/002, date of approval: 28/01/2023).

AI declaration: We hereby declare that no AI usage has been carried out throughout the conduction of the study and the preparation of the relevant manuscript.

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