**ANALYSIS OF USING FACEBOOK FEATURES**

**AMONG LUXURY, UPSCALE**

**AND ECONOMY HOTEL BRANDS**

by

Yaluan Wu

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

# LIST OF TABLES

**LIST OF FIGURES**

# ABSTRACT

The goal of this study was to analyze the usage rate of Facebook features and tools by hotel companies. The purpose was to determine whether there were significant differences among hotel brands, namely luxury, upscale and economy, on the methods in which they employed Facebook. There were 19 variables identified as being important attributes to the effective use of Facebook retrieved from a comprehensive literature review. The Facebook sites of 75 chosen hotel companies were randomly investigated from August 1 to December 31, 2013. Using JMP software, the visual differences were demonstrated. Chi-Squared statistics were used to analyze the differences.

**Chapter 1**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

For existing and potential guests, hotels are exploring new marketing vehicles to

drive their business. Social media enables them to communicate with their current and

prospective consumers directly. These channels are providing the opportunity to create an

open dialogue allowing hoteliers to take advantage of this trend and help market their

hotels more efficiently. Andrew Gajary (Sixt, 2013), general manager at the

InterContinental New York Times Square, said the current and next generations turn to

social media to garner information because it is immediate, quick and up-to-date. He

indicated that using social media is no longer just an option for hoteliers, but becoming

the only way to communicate and build a campaign (Sixt, 2013).

With the growing digital world, research by Leora Lanz (2010) showed that it is

more important to build "connections" than "impressions" as social media channels have

changed the way we do things and altered how we attract loyal and potential customers.

With the evolution of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn

and YouTube, hotel companies can now have immediate conversations with their guests

to develop loyalty. The smartest hotels will use social marketing tools to create better

brand image in order to attract the attention of new visitors, as well as to keep in touch

with their loyal customer base (Lanz, Fischhof & Lee, 2010).

Social media's impact on US enterprises is undeniable. According to the US

Interactive Marketing Spend, interactive marketing expenditure will near $55 billion and

represent 21% of total marketing expenditure by the end of 2014. Of total interactive

marketing expenses, 3% to 6% will be social media marketing (VanBoskirk, 2009).

How can businesses use social media to influence their customers? The following are

some important functions of social media that hoteliers can utilize:

a) Allow real time and two-way conversations

b) Allow customers to communicate at the point of need

c) Help information go viral and reinforce quality of messages

d) Emphasize brand's personality

e) Build business and generate ROI (Salama, 2011)

Among social media platforms, Facebook is the leading social network tool.

Approximately 50% of users logon to Facebook every day and those users spend nearly

55 minutes on Facebook each day, with almost 100 million users able to access Facebook

by their mobile devices. There are more than 3 billion photos uploaded to Facebook

every month and more than 5 billion pieces of content on the website, including news,

web links, blog posts, notes and photos (Pring, 2012). There are more than 3.5 million events created per month, over 20 million people becoming fans of pages per day and more than 1.5 million businesses with their own active pages (Cruz, Mendelsohn, & Bailey, 2010).

The goal of this study was to analyze what features of the Facebook hotel companies currently utilized and investigate the differences among different classifications on the ways they employed Facebook. To achieve this objective, the following steps were taken toward the study's methods:

The study utilized a comprehensive literature review including academic journals, trade journals and the Internet to determine common features and tools that Facebook offers. Nineteen items were identified as important attributes of Facebook tools. These 19 attributes then were used to analyze usage rate of these attributes by hotel companies and compare the differences among luxury, upscale and economy hotels. Seventy-five hotel brands were selected from the luxury, upscale and economy classifications, and their usage rates were compiled during Aug 1st to Dec 31st of 2013.

The result of this research would help the hoteliers to use Facebook effectively. In addition a discussion of various Facebook features and their frequency of use, challenges, and opportunities that each feature presents to hotel brands would prepare hotel managers to adjust their strategy of posting, engaging customers, marketing, reputation management and other benefits that this medium offers. As compared to traditional ways of advertising, the above features need to be incorporated into hotel enterprises to better

address the evolving technologies in customer relations. The study will also present a systematic analysis of each feature and how lodging industry is currently utilizing the Facebook tools. Recommendations will be made for the future studies and to set directions on how to maximize Facebook usage within the hotel industry. Academic institutions in the hospitality industry can also benefit from the findings of this investigation to recognize where the challenges are and how to address them in their classes.

**Tool Utilized**

JMP a statistical discovery software assists scientists, engineers and other data explorers to find what is hidden in the data (JMP Statistical Discovery.™ , 2014). JMP software was used to generate the distribution charts and calculate the usage ratios of the variable of this study. P-values were calculated to explore whether there were statistically significant differences among the luxury, upscale or economy hotel brands utilizing various features of the Facebook.

**Chapter 2**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The impact of social media and its influence on people's perceptions of a company has been receiving vast attention from company executives. It would be no exaggeration to estimate that if Facebook users were going to create a new country, the population would be large enough to rank as one of the top three largest countries in the world. The power of social media can be verified with statistical data. According to The Demographics of Social Media User, as of December 2012, 71% of online adults said they used Facebook, 18% of online adults said they used Twitter, and 22% of online adults said they used LinkedIn. With the rise of the smart phone, 40% of cell phone owners said they used social networking via their phone (Pew Research Internet Project [PRIP], 2013).

Social media had quickly received attention because of its ever-improved effect on a consumer's purchasing decisions. Within the hospitality industry, whether a hotel or a restaurant, that had an active and positive social media influence was often the determining factor for their potential clientele to decide whether they would become a consumer (PRIP, 2013). For example, most consumers encounter situations where they

5

based decisions on eating at a restaurant because of a friend or family member's Facebook post. However, social media's influential power could be a double-edged sword. Years of reputation could be destroyed by even a single, minor misstep in a social media strategy. That was the main reason why many companies had invested capital, labor and time to develop and preserve their social media presence. More companies were hiring professionals to specifically handle the online brand image. This was the same manner that the rising positions of Chief Technology Officer, Chief Operations Officer and the upcoming Chief Reputation Manager occurred; ascending positions to help the company stay knowledgeable given the current trends and market requirements (PRIP, 2013).

Companies wanted to use social media to monitor, react, and lead consumer behavior, as well as boost financial performance by connecting with their clients or potential customers through peer-to-peer communication. Companies were also able to convey their enterprise culture and optimize reputation management. Therefore, the content a company should have posted had been the top concern for a company to help build its online pubic image.

**Hospitality Trends 2013**

The total number of tourists that traveled the world in 2012 reached 6,847,678 persons, which showed a 13.86% growth year over year (Pham, 2013). According to Robert A. Rauch, several trends were listed as relevant for the hospitality segment.

**Put emphasis on the personal value.** Travelers connect vacations to their quality of life. Although there was a contentious and challenging climate in the world's economy, there were still powerful trends and motivations for traveling. According to the MMGY Global/Harrison Group 2012 Portrait of American Travelers, leisure travelers gained more travel experience that confirmed the significance of travel in their lifestyles (Rauch, 2013). More international visitors are expected. Arne Sorenson, President and CEO of Marriott Hotel& Resorts, said: "Leisure demand from abroad, fueled in part by the new Discover American campaign, will stimulate new demand (as cited in Rauch, 2013)." In reality, only China had ramped up to send one hundred million visitors for leisure into the international markets every single year. On average, the Chinese leisure traveler spends one week in the U.S. This means America could expect 10 million visitors from China alone (Rauch, 2013). This does not take into account other countries, such as India and Brazil, where there are thousands of visitors willing to visit the U.S.

**Social media and mobile marketing are symbiotic.** Nowadays, social media and mobile devices were inseparable. In the future, we would see them continue merging. For now, people could update information, keep contact with their friends and check in with their smart phones because mobility allowed social media to become real time. Over 50 percent of all mobile devices were smart phones. Ericsson had estimated that there would be over 50 billion connected devices in 2020 including tablets, smart phones and computers (Rauch, 2013).

**Share photos.** Photo-sharing sites, such as Instagram, could see their bright future in the hospitality industry. Pinterest had provided an easy avenue to communicate a brand

visually. For example, with Pinterest API, hotels had a wonderful opportunity to curate,
collect and highlight cool content pinned to their consumers (Rauch, 2013).

**More viral marketing videos.** Videos were one of the most important parts of
advertisement attracting web visitors. It had been predicted to be an even more important
factor in a hotel marketer's segments because more consumers were sharing videos
online and with their smartphones (Rauch, 2013).

**Content marketing instead of traditional advertising.** Many professionals had realized
the effectiveness of content marketing and had stopped utilizing traditional advertising.
By using media tools such as blogs, webinars, eBooks, newsletters and photo sharing,
investment on traditional paid media could be drastically reduced (Rauch, 2013).

**Concentrate on the brand's property websites.** As the online travel agency (OTA)
commissions rose, hotels were making increased efforts to raise direct booking on their
websites. In 2010, hotels in the United States spent an estimated $2.7 billion on OTA
commissions. Encouraging customers to directly book rooms through the hotel's own
website was the best way to regain lost return on investment (ROI). Hotels needed to
update promotions and rich media constantly to attract customers. Hoteliers then need to
manage this content across all channels, such as the mobile site, desktop website and
social media profiles (Rauch, 2013).

**Engage meeting planners through social media networks.** Meeting planners were
using social media platforms to acquire information related to hotels and conference
centers. They also used social networks to reinforce the professional relationships
between different groups. What could hotels do to attract meeting planners through their

own social media? Have Twitter accounts to manage questions or issues about a conference. Use the hotel's blog to talk about new meeting ideas (Rauch, 2013). The trends were indicators of how great an importance social media was in this digital new world. Hotel managers using social media to help as a marketing tool was both necessary and meaningful.

**Social Media History**

The Internet and social media had merged into the day-to-day life of millions of users. It enhanced the relationship between people worldwide and had reshaped the convention of human interaction and communication. The history and evolution of social media could be traced back to several decades ago. As early as the 1950s, phone "phreaking," or phone network hacking, appeared by the use of homemade electronic devices. This phone marketing creation facilitated the unauthorized access to telephone systems to make free calls (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

In 1969, one of the first commercial Internet service providers for public use in the United States was CompuServe. CompuServe used a technology called "dial-up" to dominate the field. It was also the first company to provide Internet connectivity, with multitudes of users visiting thousands of moderated forums (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

The Bulletin Board System (BBS) was invented in 1978 by two Chicago computer hobbyists. ("The Brief History of Social Media", ["SM"], 2011) The basic function of BBS was to inform colleagues about meetings, and to share information and comments

through postings. Users could login to the system, upload or download software and data, exchange communications, and read news and bulletins ("SM", 2011). Originally, BBS could only be accessed using a phone line and an analog dial-up modem. This system lasted until the early 1990s, when packet switched networks became more widely used. But in the early 1990s, the local and limiting BBS was emerging into a wide and open online community with the rapid development of the Internet. The BBS reached its peak usage in 1996 but quickly faded away after the World Wide Web became mainstream and dominated the market ("A Brief History of BBS System" ["BBS"], 2011).

In 1984, Prodigy Online service was introduced. This was an early online destination before the Internet. Prodigy Online was a pre-web premium service enabling its subscribers to access a broad range of networking services. Users were thrilled with what they could find on Prodigy. These included items such as news, weather, references, sports reports, bulletin boards, e-mail, and advertising ("BBS", 2011).

In 1995, Classmates.com was created. This was a new style of networking service with the purpose of helping its users find their classmates from kindergarten up through high school ("BBS", 2011).

The first recognizable social networking website emerged in 1997 called SixDegrees.com. The creation of this virtual community was based on the theory that any two persons could be connected through a path of six people or less. Members developed a personal community where other people could connect with each other by following and paying attention to the list of relatives and friends of his or her existing friends or

relatives. External friends could be invited to join a networking circle. The basic function of the site was to create personal profiles and search for friends ("SM", 2011).

Upon entering the 21st Century, Friendster was launched in 2002. This was one of the first for-profit online dating sites. It focused on introducing its customers to others with similar interests. The site was also used for dating, discovering new events, bands, and hobbies ("BBS", 2011). In 2003, MySpace, a social networking service with a strong emphasis on music, was created. It quickly gained popularity and became the most visited social networking site in the world. As similar networking websites had done, MySpace provided an interactive, user-submitted network of friends, personal profiles, photos, blogs, music and videos online (MySpace 2013).

Even today, MySpace was the world's six most popular English-language website (MySpace 2013). After that, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube rank as the four most successful and classic social networking services.

**Definition of Social Media**

Contrary to traditional media, social media was a type of online media that helped expedite conversation. It allowed people to quickly be informed of what was happening and personally participate by sharing details of their lives. These details included biographical data, professional information, and personal photos and updated thoughts.

The second feature of social media was communication technologies. Therefore it was highly related to the development of technology and platforms that enabled the

interactive web's content creation. A characteristic of this was the wide variety of content formats shared on social media platforms such as text, videos, photographs, comments, news and audio. The large explosion of information was exemplified to the extreme by social media (Cohen, 2011). A distinguishing attribute of social media was its one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications, which could be made in either real time or asynchronously over time.

Based on these features of present day social media, the definition of social media can be summarized by several representations:

- From Wikipedia, social media was defined as:

"A media type for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. Social media was the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue." (Social media, 2014)

- According to Cheryl Burgess's Blue Focus Marketing (2011), social media consists of various user-driven channels, such as Facebook and Twitter, which represented a stark difference from the advertiser-driven push model (Burgess, 2011).

- From Heidi Cohen's Riverside Marketing Strategies, social media are platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging users to participate in,

comment on and create content as means of communication with their social

graph (Cohen, 2011).

**Main Social Media Tools**

- Facebook

Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook with his college roommates and fellow

students Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. Users can create their

own photos, contact information and list of interests, as examples. Unlike other social

media, Facebook distinguishes common users and brands. In user pages, users can post

advertisements or build fan groups to enhance the influence of their own brands

(Facebook, 2012).

In February of 2004, Facebook was first launched but was restricted to Harvard

students only. Facebook allowed anyone who is at least 13 years old to become a

registered user. These users could share photos, blogs, music, video and comment on

his/her Facebook friend's content. The Facebook network was on the rise and was

expanding its influence to other countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia,

Malaysia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Vietnam (Facebook, 2012).

- Twitter

Twitter is an online service that enables you to broadcast short messages to your

friends or "followers." It was considered a micro blogging service that allowed users to

send and read text-based messages of up to 140 characters, known as "tweets." Twitter was usable with mobile phones and personal computers (Twitter, 2013).

Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams and Biz Stone created Twitter in 2006. As of 2012, Twitter had more than 500 million registered users, generating more than 340 million tweets daily (Twitter, 2013).

- LinkedIn

LinkedIn was the business-oriented social networking site created specifically for professionals. Users of LinkedIn could create professional profiles, upload resumes and formal photos, and post serious information regarding job-hunting, professional connections, and industry knowledge. LinkedIn was founded in 2002. As of 2013, the site had more than 200 million acquired users in more than 200 countries and territories (LinkedIn 2013).

- YouTube

YouTube was founded in 2005 and was the world's most popular online video community. On the site, millions of people could share their discovery of new video and audio content. Created by PayPal employees in 2005, YouTube consisted of user-generated video content including music video, educational video, television shows and short original videos. In November of 2006, Google bought YouTube for $1.65 billion (YouTube, 2013).

**Social Media Marketing in Lodging Industry**

With the maturity of technology, social media was helping hotels overcome the limits of intelligence gathering by collecting wide range information from public or proprietary sources. Many hotels had created a Facebook, Twitter or other social media presence and operated them actively. The power of mouth of word was astonishing (Zeisser, 2010).

Most of time, social media influence went unnoticed but impacted a hotel's financial performance with the accumulation improving bit by bit. Social media had the core function to monitor, respond, amplify and lead consumer behavior (Zeisser, 2010). The best time to carry out those functions was looked for when consumers made purchasing decisions (Divol, Edelman, Sarrazin, 2012). Research completed by Divol, Edelman and Sarrazin (2012) into how the hotel industry used social media for marketing found that Facebook ranked first and was the best opportunity to directly improve a hotel's online booking with social media.

The research strategy used was to create a compelling and interactive Facebook experience for guests and encourage guest loyalty. Applications could also be integrated with the hotel's Facebook presence. For example, Buuteeq's free hotel Facebook app was one of the application's putting properties' rooms, photos, location and contact information on the site. It was very desirable way to turn social media hotel visitors into social media hotel bookers (Divol, et al., 2012).

Another service utilized was "Facebook Nearby." "Facebook Nearby" was a local directory application for smart phones. To capitalize on the social media craze, luxury hotels employed social media contests to boost its social media exposure and encourage travelers to become consumers (Nayer, 2012). For example, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts celebrated Social Media Day on June 30 for its fans on Facebook, Twitter and Foursquare. Restaurants and lounges throughout the Fairmont hotel portfolio would offer free appetizers during the day and guests would have opportunity to receive a 25% discount (Nayer, 2012). Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts hosted an event to give travelers a chance to win a gift card in order to stimulate travel incentives. Four Seasons also added their dream destinations to the custom-designed Facebook application, the "World of Wonder (Nayer, 2012)."

**Facebook Content Strategy**

Although the importance of social media marketing has been recognized, the true value of the rewards social media could bring was still being evaluated. Hotels invested millions of dollars in social media with little understanding of how it influenced consumers (Divol, et al., 2012). This was a highly risky commercial decision. Consequently, how to properly employ social media resources and gain financial rewards was one of the top concerns for hotels' social media operations and preservation. Recently, Content Strategy Management (CSM) had attracted further interest from the industry. Hotels that belong to different brand classifications had different social media content strategies. Corporate social media content, and cross-sector communication and

cooperation were needed to diversify, harness and contribute to the engaging freshness and effectiveness of the firm's social media. For other types of hotels, creating a customized content strategy would be efficiently transforming its social media website into an animated, searchable website (Divol, et al., 2012).

Improving the quality of the content posted to Facebook was the first problem that hoteliers needed to worry about. The most beneficial way that Facebook was used is "engaging" followers of the page, so that the content posted to the site that were engaging received prominence. Hoteliers would engage potential guests and initiated dialogues that captured future bookings. In order to design an effective Facebook model, many investigations were made. These articles and research provided several ideas on the creation of a successful Facebook marketing strategy.

**The 80/20 Rule**

The 80/20 Rule was a very important rule for hoteliers to follow. The rule meant providing useful and meaningful content in the following manner: 80% of the content would have no relationship with self-promotion and 20% of the content or less would be related to self-promotion or special offers (Cormier, 2013). If the only goal to using a Facebook page were increasing sales, the hotel company would probably face failure. The main purpose of a social media webpage was building relationships with customers instead of increasing sales directly. Customers do not want to visit a Facebook page and see a business posting primarily about their product or publishing content that looks like a marketing brochure. What the hoteliers should do was to tell a story on Facebook to

touch their customers (Cormier, 2013).

**5 Ways to Improve Facebook Engagement**

According to Krista Bunskoek (2013), there are 5 ways to improve Facebook engagement:

- Show simple pictures (403x403 pixels) with striking captions instead of showing links to the pictures.

- Use the fans' content and give the customers a shout-out. Show the customers that you care about what they say and their feelings.

- Involve the customers by asking them questions or let them simply fill in the blanks. Keep the questions simple and interesting and it will definitely draw the customers' attention easily.

- Upload images with short descriptions and invite the fans to provide a caption.

- Share quotes to help reinforce the company's brand. The quote should support the company's campaign goals (Bunskoek, 2013).

**Enhancement of Facebook Engagement**

An article written by Debbie Hemley (2013a) provided many clues related to Facebook engagement enhancement:

- Moderate size of images will leave fans with a great impression. Either too small or too big will develop quick terrible impressions.

- Multiple buttons should be displayed on the website so that fans who prefer Twitter could tweet or pin using Pinterest.

- Create leads for your fans such as to upcoming events and easy to follow registration links to your company events online.

- In order to show the company cares, use the fan's name to make any response to specific comments and questions.

- Optimize the company's social presence. Make sure the company's profile is clear and organized including the company's logo, website URL and a clear description of your business. Upload pictures to help people recognize your business (Hemley, 2013a).

**Cross-Promotion of Social Media**

Ben Pickering (2013) said in his article:

"Your Facebook pages are the perfect hub to cross-promote content from your Twitter, Instagram or Pinterest feed."

He also stated:

- Publish content from your blog to your Facebook webpage.

- Provide information related to contest and promotions.

- Add email subscribers to grab the attention of your fans. If the customer liked your page, he/she gets 12%-increased chances to see your posts.

- Build out commerce-oriented tabs and add product links to drive purchase (Pickering, 2013).

**Social Media Games**

Cas McCullough (2013) wrote an interesting article discussing the use of social games to create better engagement on Facebook. The following were the games he found that could be run successfully on a page timeline or in groups:

- "Take Your Best Guess:" A prize was given to the customers who answered the question correctly or left the comment earliest. A time limit could be put on the game so that fans know the rule of the game. If there was just one correct answer or just one prize, it was important to let customers know to protect their enthusiasm.

- "Ask Next Friend:" This game was begun by kick-starting a thread with posting an "either/or" question. The next person would answer the question and then created his/her own question. This game quickly built the community and camaraderie (McCullough, 2013).

An article written by Danielle Cormier (2013) discussed the hot topic with

contrasting outlook. She examined 10 mistakes that could hurt Facebook engagement. I summarized it to eight points:

- Keeping the post long and boring. Limiting the number of characters to below 100 is important.

- Asking broad, difficult questions. Keep the questions simple and funny.

- Bad timing. During busy hours fans could be engrossed in a favorite TV show, for example, so posting during this time you will face challenges.

- Doing nothing with your fans. Instead, ask your fans to share or like what you post.

- Sharing content that had no connection with your business. This kind of content easily gained negative feedback and was reported as spam. If you are dying to share an interesting post, try to build a connection between it and your brand. Remember do not discuss anti-social topics on Facebook.

- Focusing on selling only. Instead, listen, tell stories, and respond to the customers to make them engage more.

- Violate the 80/20 Rule. Only 20% of all posts should be related to a selling purpose. Otherwise, it will annoy the customers.

- Focus on the same type of posts. Make the content vary and being creative is necessary and important (Cormier, 2013).

**Increasing Facebook Engagement Overnight**

Scott Ayres (2013) wrote an article named "These 5 Posts Will Increase Your Facebook Engagement Overnight." In this article I summarized and found two important points:

- Focus on interaction with customers. The successful example used was an interesting picture where fans were asked to caption it, resulting in high customer engagement.

- Use quotes, fill-in-the-blanks and ask questions (Ayres, 2013).

The results of the Facebook engagement posts are shown in Figure 1 (Visual.ly, 2013).
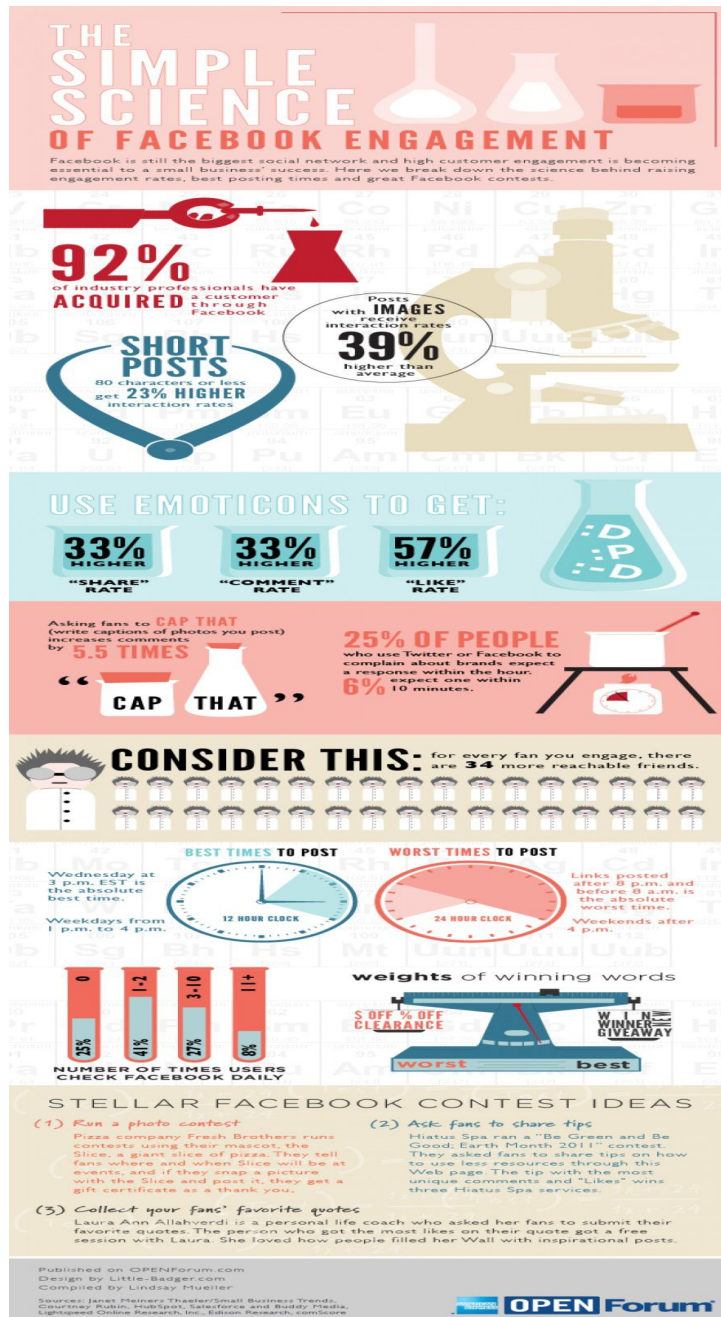
**Figure 1 The Simple Science Of Facebook Engagement**

**Top Social Media Power Influencers**

Tiffany Black (2013) worked in branding and social strategy and had created a list of the top 50 social media power influencers. He gave suggestions on how to reach and engage more fans through Facebook:

- Posting time and quality is important. Posting between 8 am and 7 pm would receive 20% more fans than posting any other time. Wednesdays and Sundays were the best days to post. Posting 3 to 4 quality materials will receive more likes and comments. There is 66% higher engagement if you post 80 characters or less instead of longer posts.

- Ask your fans questions or ask them to fill-in-the-blanks. Always keep the questions simple.

- Let fans talk about themselves so that they feel related to the topic.

- Use images in your Facebook webpage to make fans feel relaxed, have fun and enjoy themselves.

- Try to post something light and interesting (Black, 2013).

Irfan Ahmad (2013) created a picture to show the results of his 10 simple ways to improve the Facebook page engagement. Figure 2 shows his results (Ahmad, 2013).

**Figure 2 10 Ways to Boost Your Facebook Page Engagement**

Stephanie Yamkovenko (2013) offers 5 ways to increase social media engagement:

- Make the determination when fans are online. According to data received from the National Health Care Association, Yamkovenko found that most fans are on Facebook at noon and from 5 pm to 9 pm.

- Track post outreach. This has useful insight because it displays line charts of number of followers reached, number of posts, likes, comments, shares and hide.

- Determine the post content type.

- Track who engaged with your page. Seeing a gender, age and location can help to determine what kind of consumer the content is attracting. If there are strategic audience objectives, this can show whether you are achieving your goal.

- Combine the insights to get result. Test a certain time period to see the number of followers reached, number of likes, shares and comments (Yamkovenko, 2013).

**Fundamental Facebook Engagement Model**

Based on the literature review a preliminary model composed of 19 significant items were formulated to analyze the effectiveness of hotel Facebook pages:

- Picture Sharing: Pictures were important when posted together with words. Making the picture clear and comfortable to see was necessary (Hemley, 2013a). Adhere to image sizing requirements on social networks and make the profile picture suitable size. Do not make pictures too small for the space or out of focus, this leaves bad impressions on the customers (Bunskoek, 2013).

- Easy To Share: Make it easy for customers to share your content such as share with blog (Pickering, 2013). Provide multiple sharing options (Hemley, 2013a).

- Event Descriptions: Ensure event descriptions make it clear where official registration happens. Include easy-to-follow registration links when you promote your company events online (Hemley, 2013a). Show your personality to your fans (Ahmad,2013).

- Use Fan Names: Use your fans' names when you respond to their questions or comments (Hemley, 2013a). Love your followers (Ahmad,2013).

- Information Up-To-Date: Schedule regular housekeeping checks of your social network presences to keep information, logos and images up to date (Hemley, 2013b).

- Logo: Load your picture on each of your social networks to help customers recognize the public face of your business (Coulson, 2009).

- Videos and Slides: Use multimedia content such as pictures, videos and slide shows (Cormier, 2013; Hemley, 2013b).

- Complaints: Address complaints offline and one-on-one with your customer (Hemley, 2013a).

- Applications: Use various applications on your Facebook page (Hemley, 2013). Besides the Photos, Events, Videos and Likes which are the four standard Facebook apps, any apps can be added to Facebook by the third party to a Facebook webpage. Here are the most popular 8 apps added to Facebook. According to Andrea Vahi, the apps are Heyo, North social, Pagemodo, ShortStack, Thunderpenny, Tabfoundry, Tabsite and Woobox. Most of them required monthly fee (Vahi,2013).

- Social Channels: Integrate other social media channels such as blog (Hemley, 2013a; Pickering, 2013).

- Contests/Promotions: Run contests and promotions (Pickering, 2013; Hemley, 2013b).

- E-Commerce: Enable E-Commerce (Pickering, 2013). Sell products through your Facebook Page (Lile, 2013).

- Share News: Posts with a simple image and a caption that show fans the solution to a problem or a way to improve their daily lives (Cormier, 2013).

- Share Fan Content: Use your fans' content instead of your own (Bunskoek, 2013). Ask fans to talk about themselves (Black, 2013).

- Involve Customers: Involve customers with a question such as ask next friend (McCullough, 2013). Ask fans to share their consumer preferences, help name a new product or describe memories and moments associated with your brand (Bunskoek, 2013).

- Fill-In-The-Blank: Let them fill in the blank (Ayres, 2013).

- Customer With Caption: Upload images and write a short description that invites fans to provide a caption (Bunskoek, 2013).

- Quotes: Use quotes from icons to reinforce your company's brand (Ayres, 2013).

- Like and Share: Gather votes with Like vs. Share (Bunskoek, 2013).

According to the articles and papers, these 19 items showed up in a high frequency and utilizing these 19 characters we can build a premier model.

## Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study was to analyze the usage rate of Facebook features and tools by hotel companies and determine whether there were significant differences among hotel classes, namely luxury, upscale and economy, on the methods in which they employed Facebook. Retrieved from a comprehensive literature review, 19 significant variables were identified as being important attributes to the effective use of Facebook at the time of the study. During February 2014, the researcher examined all the 75 brands' Facebook websites directly and recorded all daily postings from August 1 to December 31, 2014. Then the author categorized all the observations into 19 features and did a statistical analysis, using JMP software. The visual differences were demonstrated, and Chi-Squared statistics were used to analyze the differences among the three hotel classifications.

There are six scales for hotel brand classifications. These are luxury, upper upscale, upscale, upper mid-scale, mid-scale and economy (STR). For this study only luxury, upscale and economy hotels were selected. The determination to choose these three classifications was made because the differences were projected to be more pronounced

and significantly different among the three scales, if any. It was anticipated that if adjacent scales were chosen, significant differences among the classifications might not have been profound.

**Research Hypothesis:**

There are no significant differences among hotel brands, namely luxury, upscale and economy, on the methods in which they employed the 19 Facebook attributes identified in this study.

**Research Question:**

What features of the Facebook do hotel companies most frequently use?

**Subjects:**

A sample of 75 hotel Facebook sites were selected based on their industry classification. The subject hotels were luxury, upscale or economy hotels, with 25 brands in each category.

**Sample:**

A random sample method was used to select the hotel websites. According to Smith Travel Research (2013), there are 85 luxury hotel brands, 250 upscale hotel brands and 108 economy hotel brands. For each brand category, every property was assigned a number. The number was then written on a piece of paper and categories were shuffled together. For each brand category, 25 slips of paper were chosen and the numbers on the paper assigned the 25 participants for that category. Since not every hotel has a Facebook page, if a hotel without a page was chosen, it was taken out of contention and another number was chosen as replacement. Table 1 lists all subject hotels for each brand

category (STR, 2013).

**Table 1. 75 Hotel Companies in Luxury, Upscale and Economy Hotel Brands**

| Luxury | Upscale | Economy |
|---|---|---|
| Fairmont Hotels & Resorts | Crowne Plaza | America's Best Inn** |
| Four Seasons Hotel & Resorts | Courtyard by Marriott | America's Best Value Inn |
| Grand Hyatt | Club Med** | Days Inn |
| JW Marriott | Double Tree | Budget Host Inn & Suites |
| Ritz-Carlton | Hilton Garden Inn | Budget Suites of America** |
| W Hotel | Disneyland Hotel | Budgetel |
| Colony Hotel | Canada Inn | EconoLodge |
| Edition hotel | Aloft Hotel | Studios** |
| Firmdale | Adam's Mark** | Extended Stay America |
| Intercontinental | Grand America | Motel 6 |
| Langham | Hotel Indigo | Select Inn** |
| The Prince | Hyatt Place | Howard Johnson's |
| AKA** | Prince Hotel | Travelodge |
| Hotel Monaco | Park Plaza | Super 8 |
| The Peninsula | Residence Inn | Red Roof Inn |
| Rock Resorts** | Staybridge Suites | Masters Inn** |
| Rosewood | Springhill Suites | Jameson Inn** |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Affina** | Aston Hotel** | Knights Inn** |
| Doyle Collection | Little America | Homestead |
| Luxury Collection | Homewood Suites | Microtel |
| Helmsley Hotel | Four Points | Value Place |
| Preferred | Room Mate | Red Carpet Inn** |
| Viceroy** | Coast Hotel | Wellesley Inn |
| The Tides** | Jolly | Extended Stay Deluxe |
| Loews | Caesars Entertainment | StudioPLUS** |

Procedures:

To analyze this hypothesis, the following methodologies were exercised:

- Identification of brand classification of hotels was completed to begin collecting and analyzing how each hotel company utilized Facebook. For the data collection, "yes/no" table was created to show the hotels' use of Facebook for each item. If the hotel Facebook website employed the specific item, it was marked as a "yes". If the item was not made use of, it was given a "no".

- Comparison of results: Compared the usage of Facebook in 75 hotels in three brand classifications. Used JMP software to calculate the P-values for each item compared.

- Completed an assessment of the results and reached a final conclusion that

would present hotel companies better suggestions for the future.

# Chapter 4

## FINDINGS

**JMP Software Distribution Figures**

JMP software was utilized to produce the following distribution figures. It showed how many "Yes" and "No" responses were recorded in terms of the 19 items in the 3 brand classifications. The tables show the frequency of "yes" and "no" in each item category.
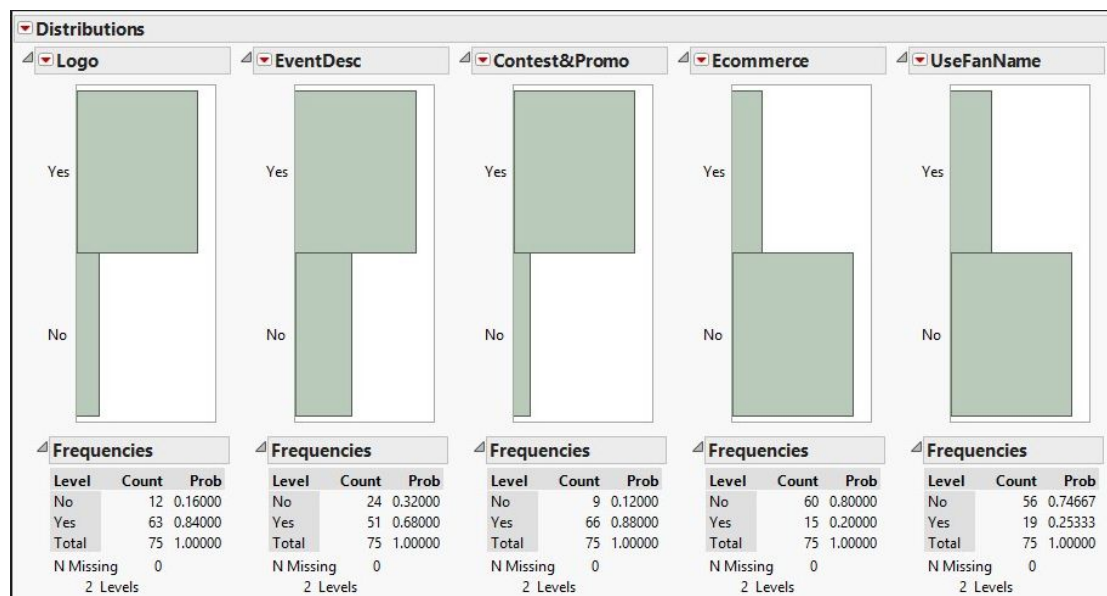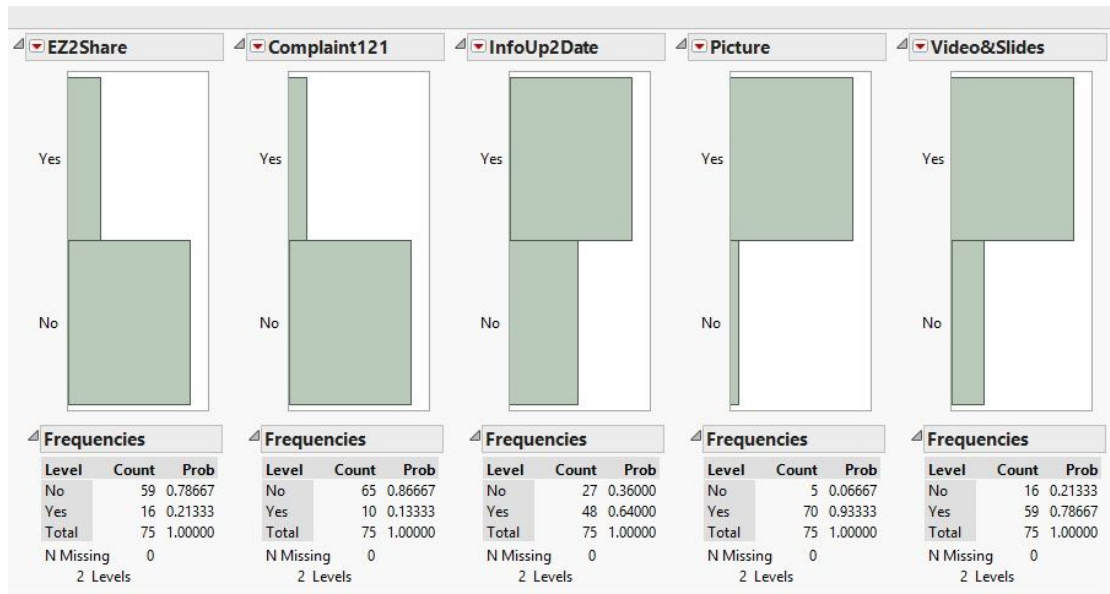


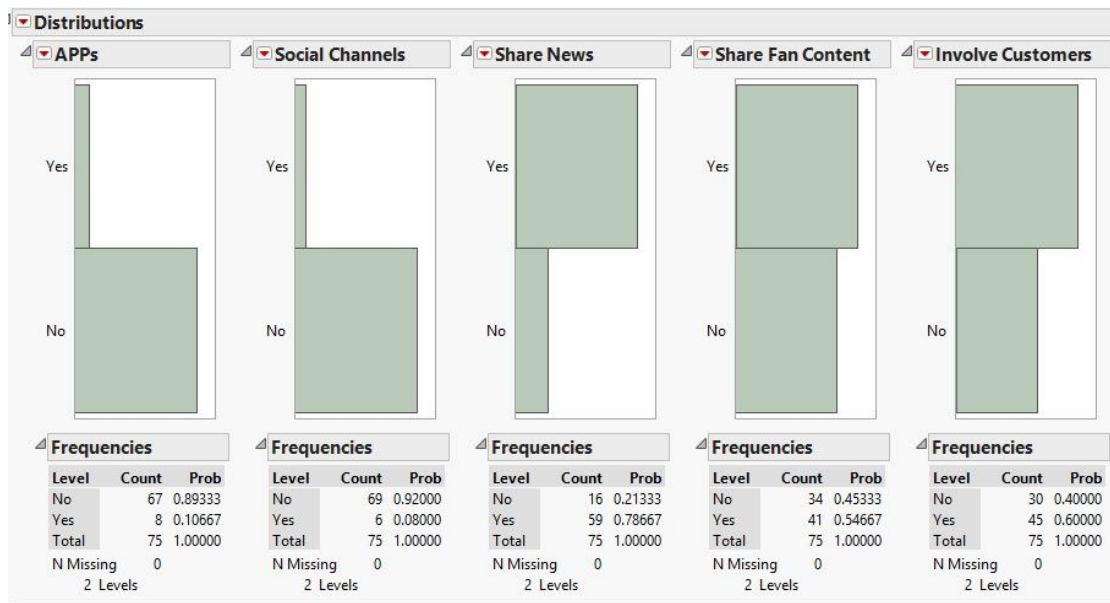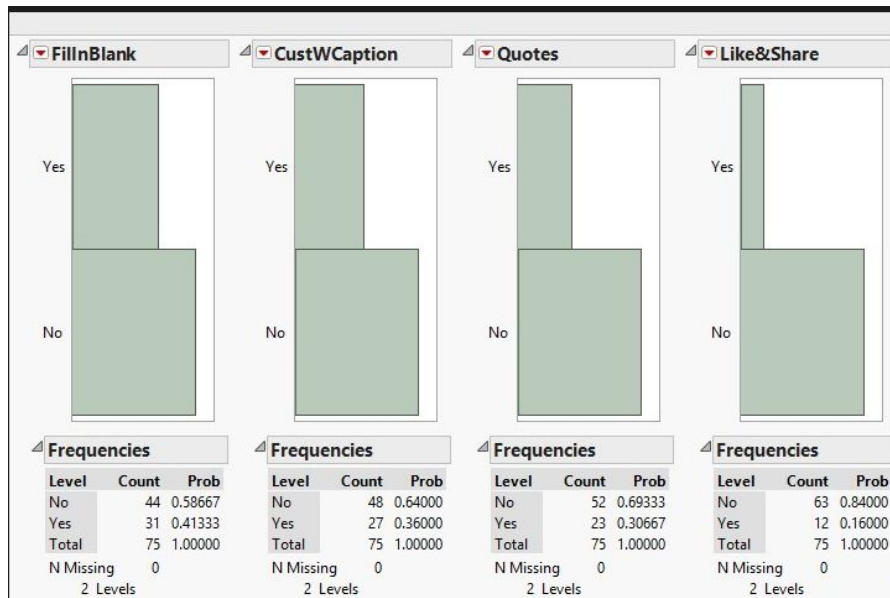**Figure 3 Distribution charts**

**Figure 4 Distribution charts**



**Figure 5 Distribution charts**

**Figure 6 Distribution charts**

**Item Correlation Charts**

All tables utilized p>0.1, with significant findings having a p of less than 0.1 and insignificant findings having a p of greater than 0.1.
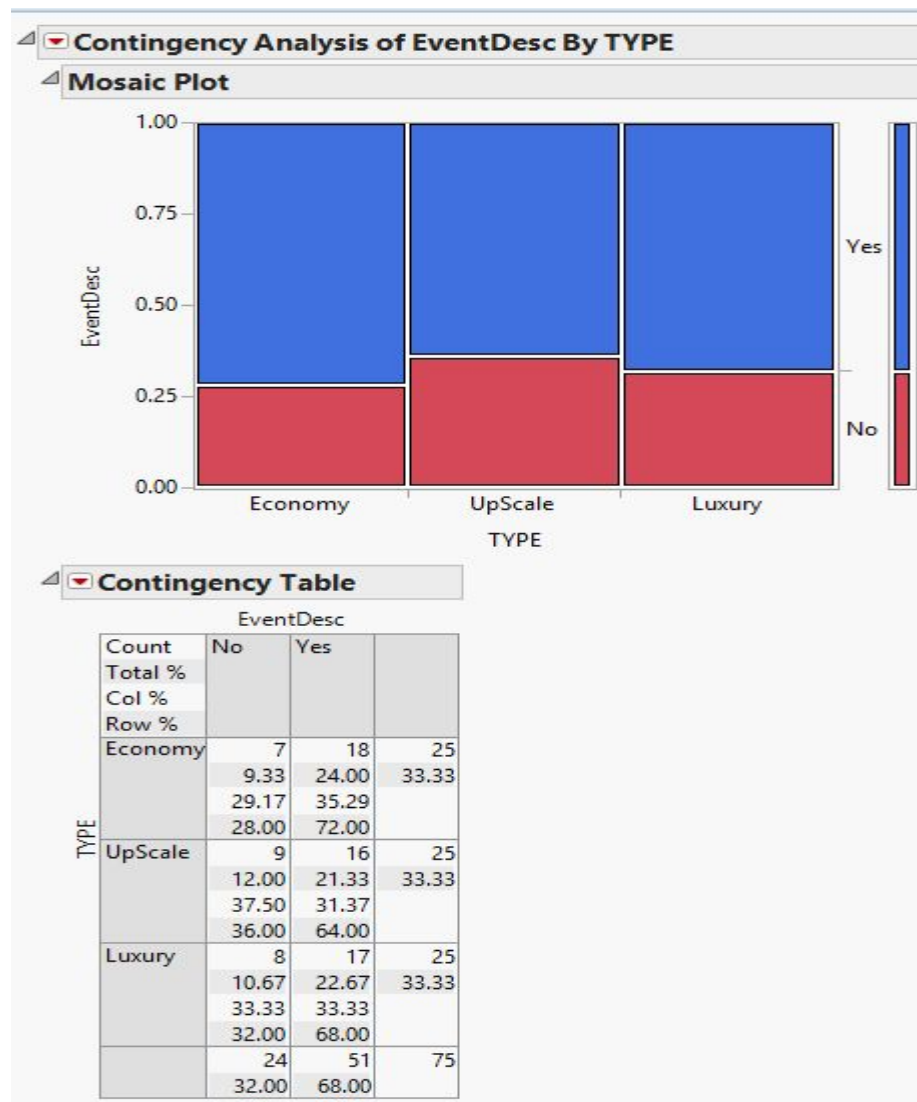
**"Logos"**
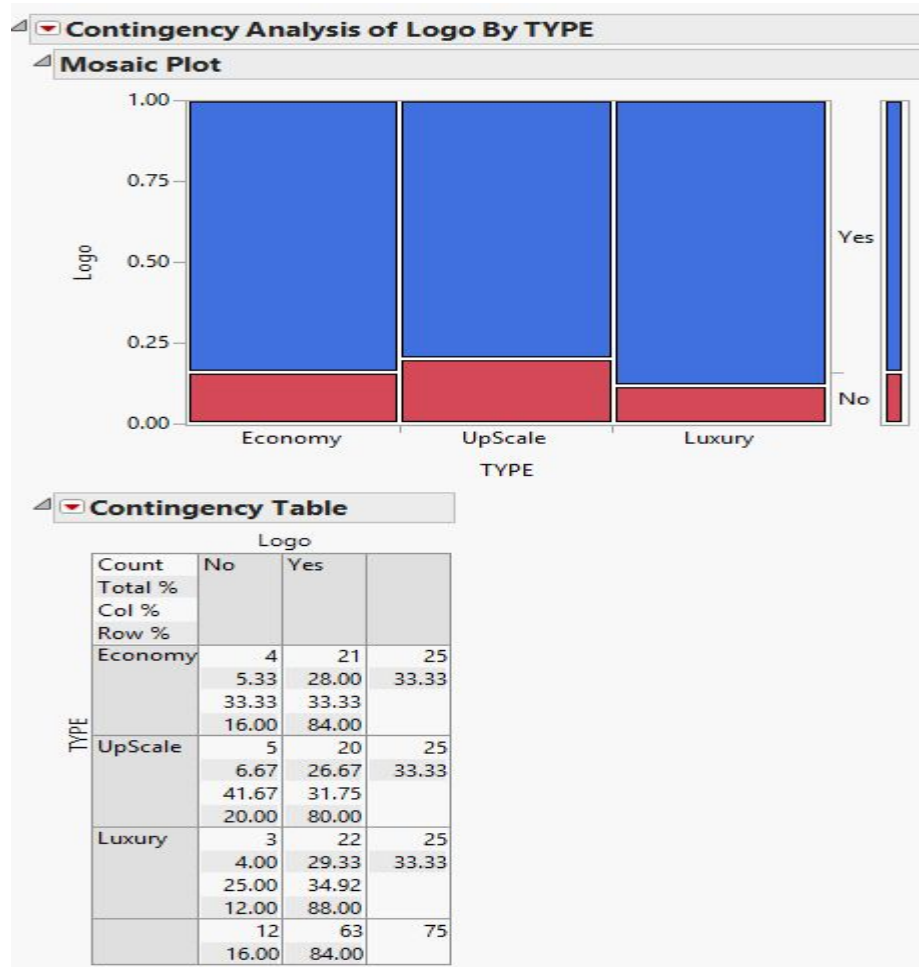


**Figure 7 Contingency Analysis Logos by Type**

**Figure 8 Logos ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 7 and Figure 7.1 show no significant difference when using logos among the three brand classifications on social media.

**"Event Descriptions"**



**Figure 9 Contingency Analysis Event Descriptions by Type**

**Figure 10 Event Descriptions ChiSquare Tests**

Figures 8 and 8.1 showed that there was no significant distinction with the use of event descriptions among the three hotel classifications.
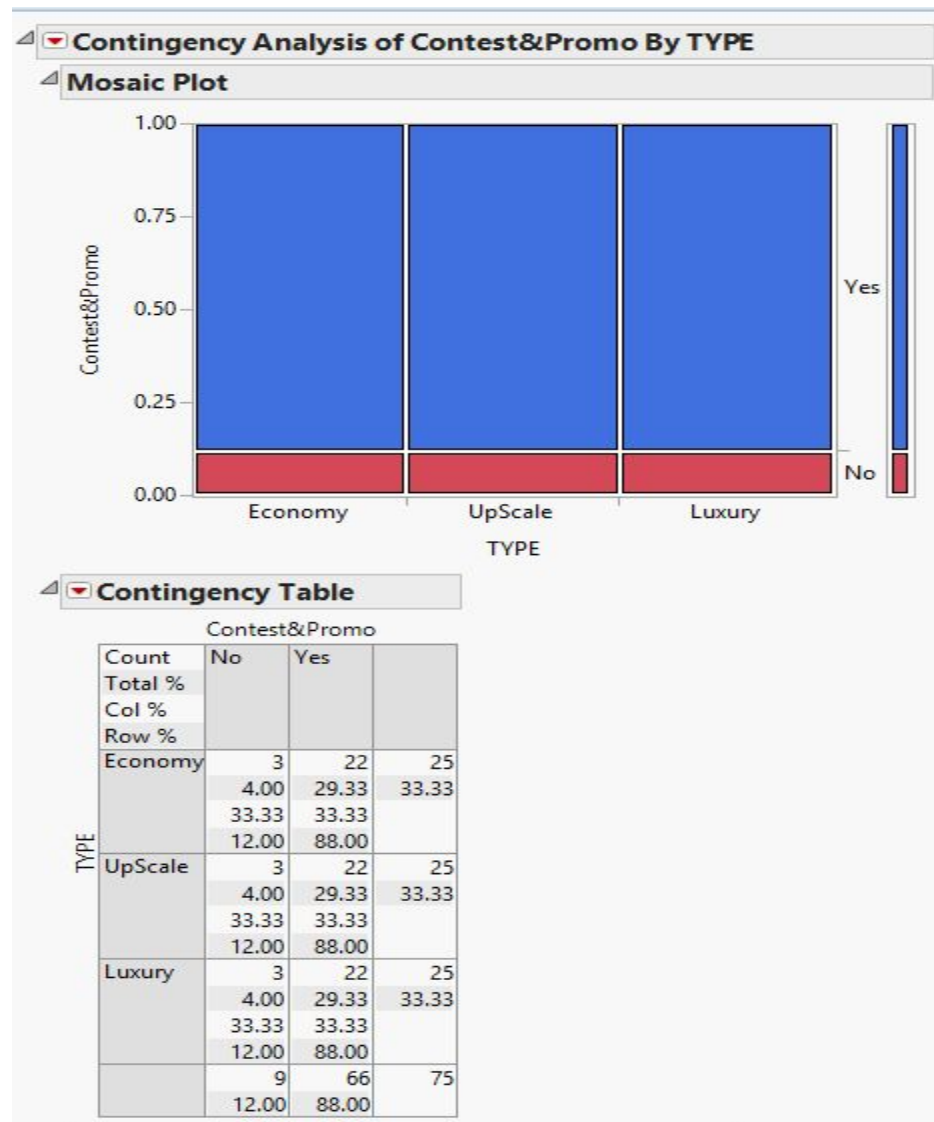
**"Contests and Promotions"**



**Figure 11 Contingency Analysis Contests & Promotions by Type**

**Tests**

| N | DF | -LogLike | RSquare (U) |
|---|----|---------|-------------|
| 75 | 2 | 0 | 0.0000 |

| Test | ChiSquare | Prob>ChiSq |
|------|-----------|------------|
| Likelihood Ratio | 0.000 | 1.0000 |
| Pearson | 0.000 | 1.0000 |

**Figure 12 Contests & Promotions ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 9.1 indicated no significant difference when using contests and promotions among the brand classifications.
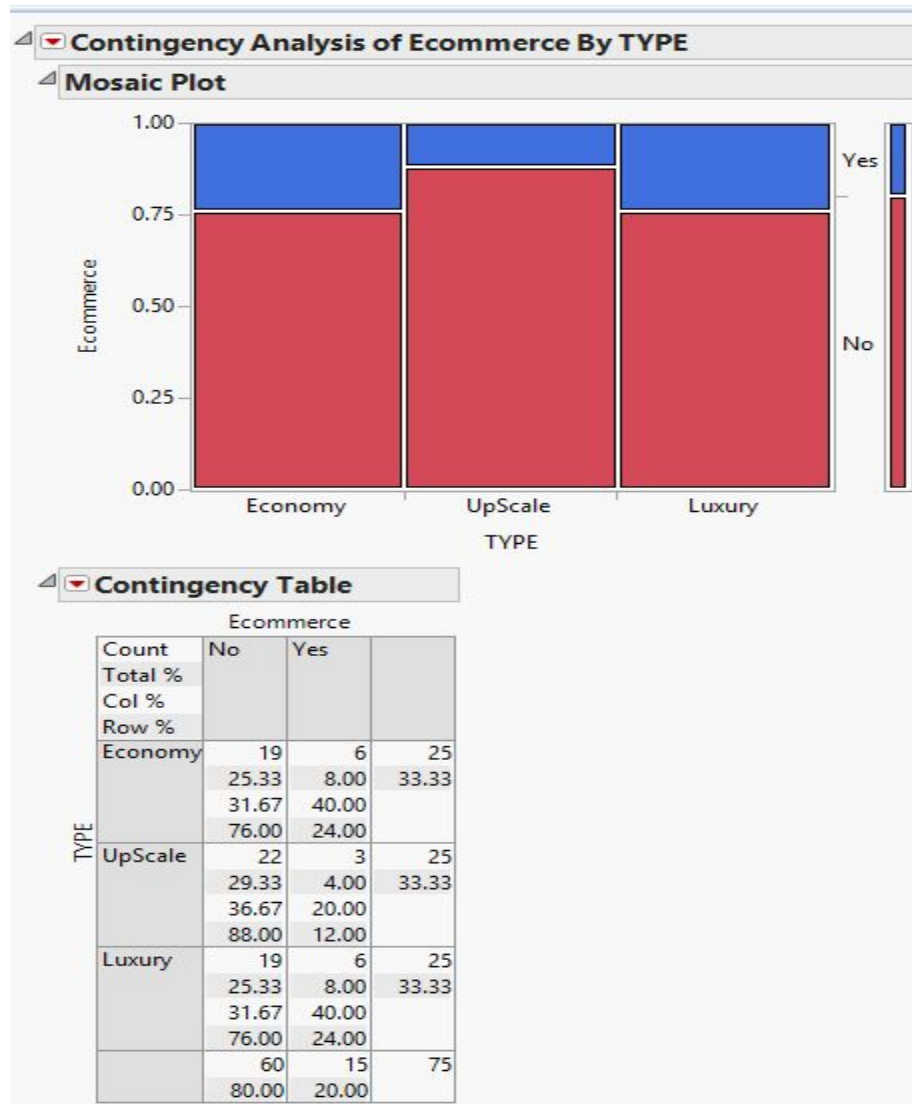
**"E-Commerce"**



**Figure 13 Contingency Analysis E-Commerce by Type**

**Figure 14 E-Commerce ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 10 and 10.1 presented that there was no noteworthy difference for using E-Commerce among the three hotel categories.
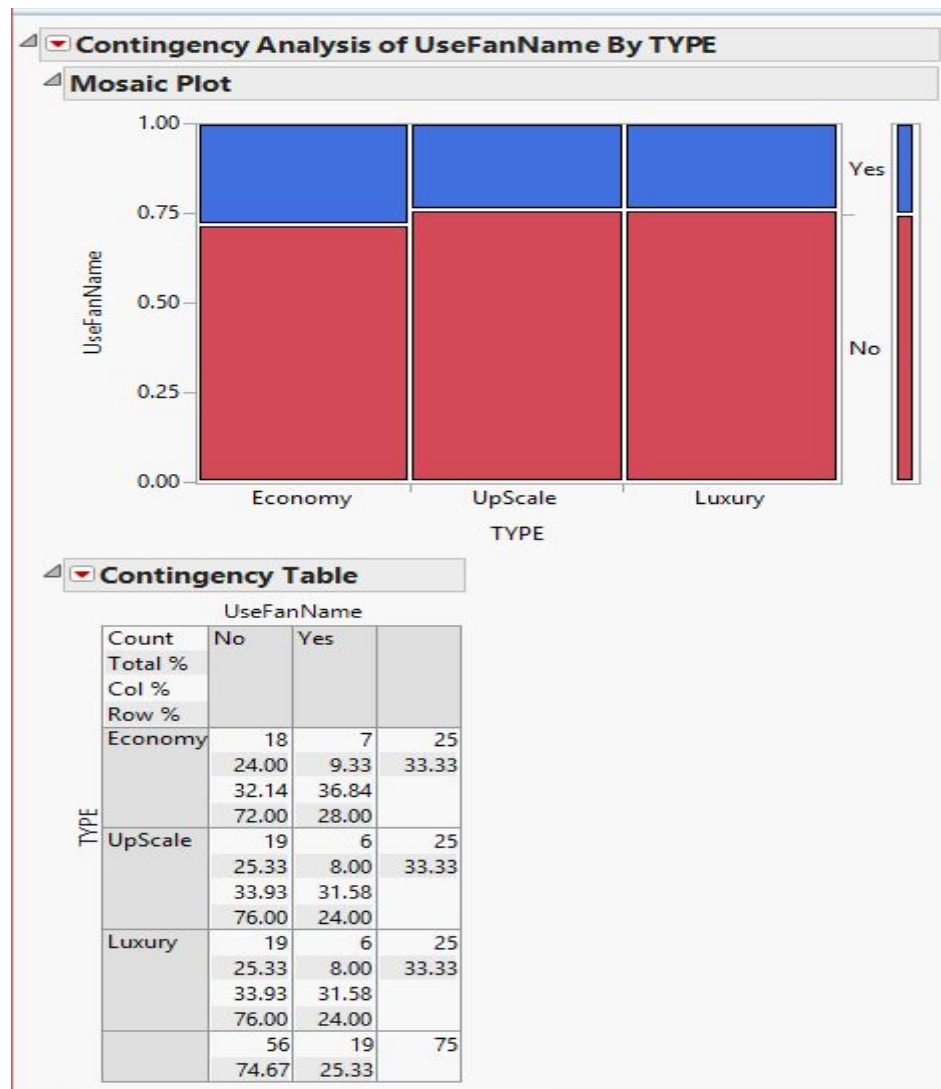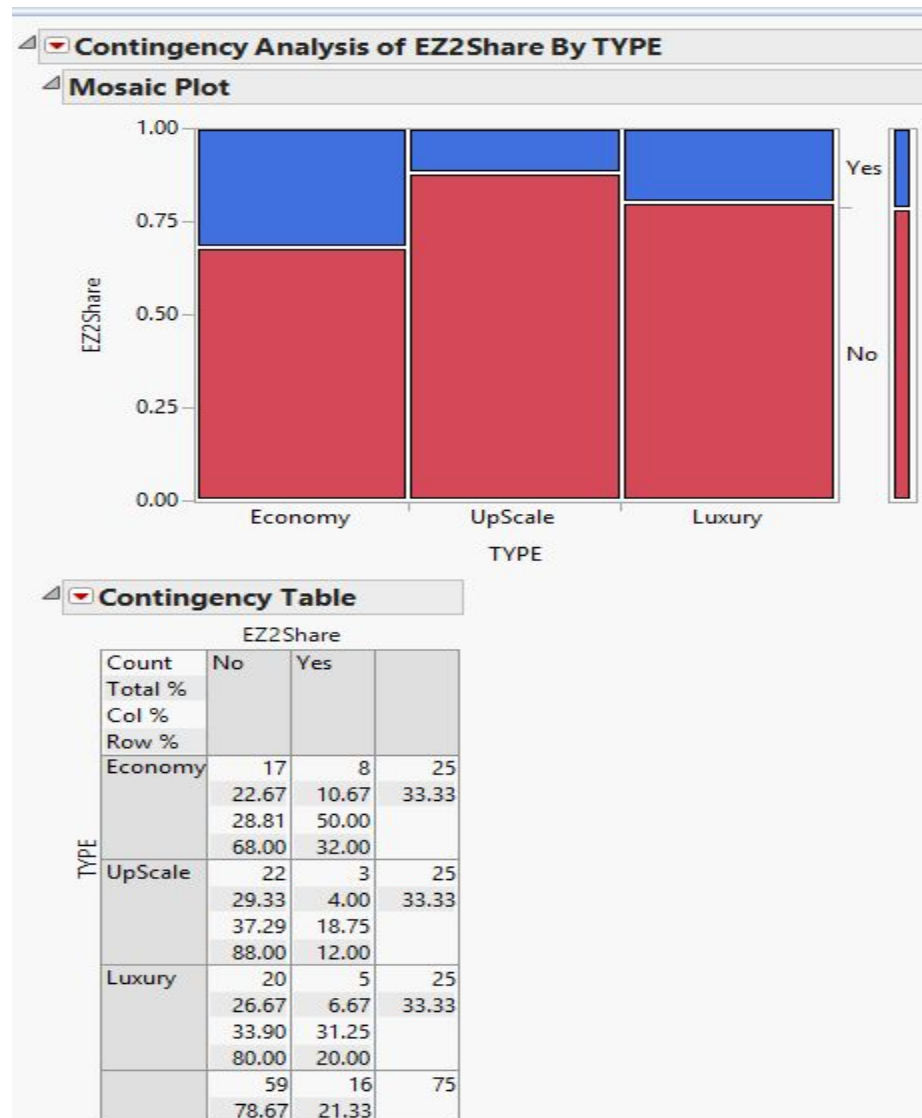
**"Use of Fan Name"**



**Figure 15 Contingency Analysis Use of Fan Name by Type**

**Figure 16 Use of Fan Name ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 11 and Figure 11.1 implied there were no significant variances when inputting the fan's name among the three hotel classifications.

**"Easy to Share"**



**Contingency Analysis of EZ2Share By TYPE**

**Mosaic Plot**

**Contingency Table**

EZ2Share

| Count<br>Total %<br>Col %<br>Row % | No | Yes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economy | 17 | 8 | 25 |
| | 22.67 | 10.67 | 33.33 |
| | 28.81 | 50.00 | |
| | 68.00 | 32.00 | |
| UpScale | 22 | 3 | 25 |
| | 29.33 | 4.00 | 33.33 |
| | 37.29 | 18.75 | |
| | 88.00 | 12.00 | |
| Luxury | 20 | 5 | 25 |
| | 26.67 | 6.67 | 33.33 |
| | 33.90 | 31.25 | |
| | 80.00 | 20.00 | |
| | 59 | 16 | 75 |
| | 78.67 | 21.33 | |

**Figure 17 Contingency Analysis Easy to Share by Type**

**Figure 18 Easy to Share ChiSquare Tests**

In item "Easy to Share," Figures 12 and 12.1 denoted no meaningful difference among the three categories.
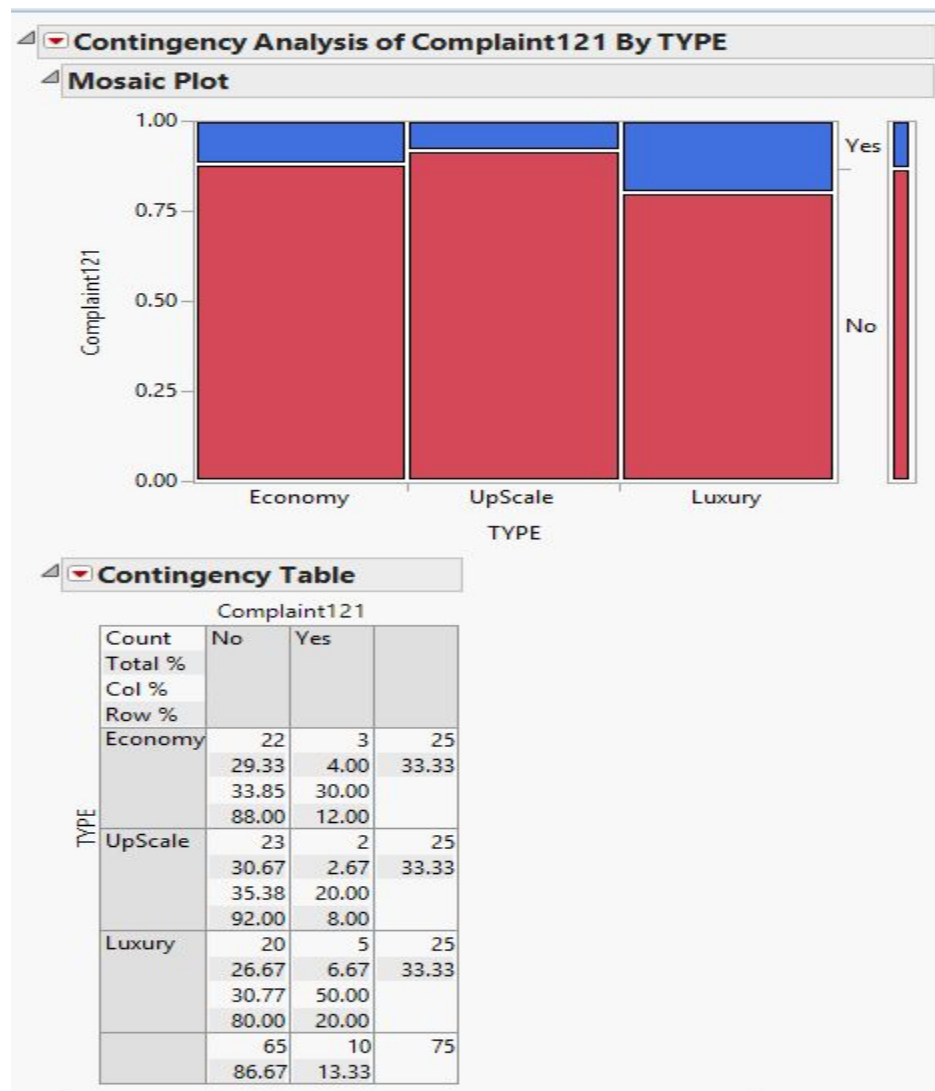
**"Addressing Complaints One-to-One"**



**Figure 19 Contingency Analysis Addressing complaints One-to-One by Type**

**Figure 20 Address Complaints One-to-One ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 13 and 13.1 indicated that there were no significant differentiations when addressing complaints one to one among the three hotel classifications.
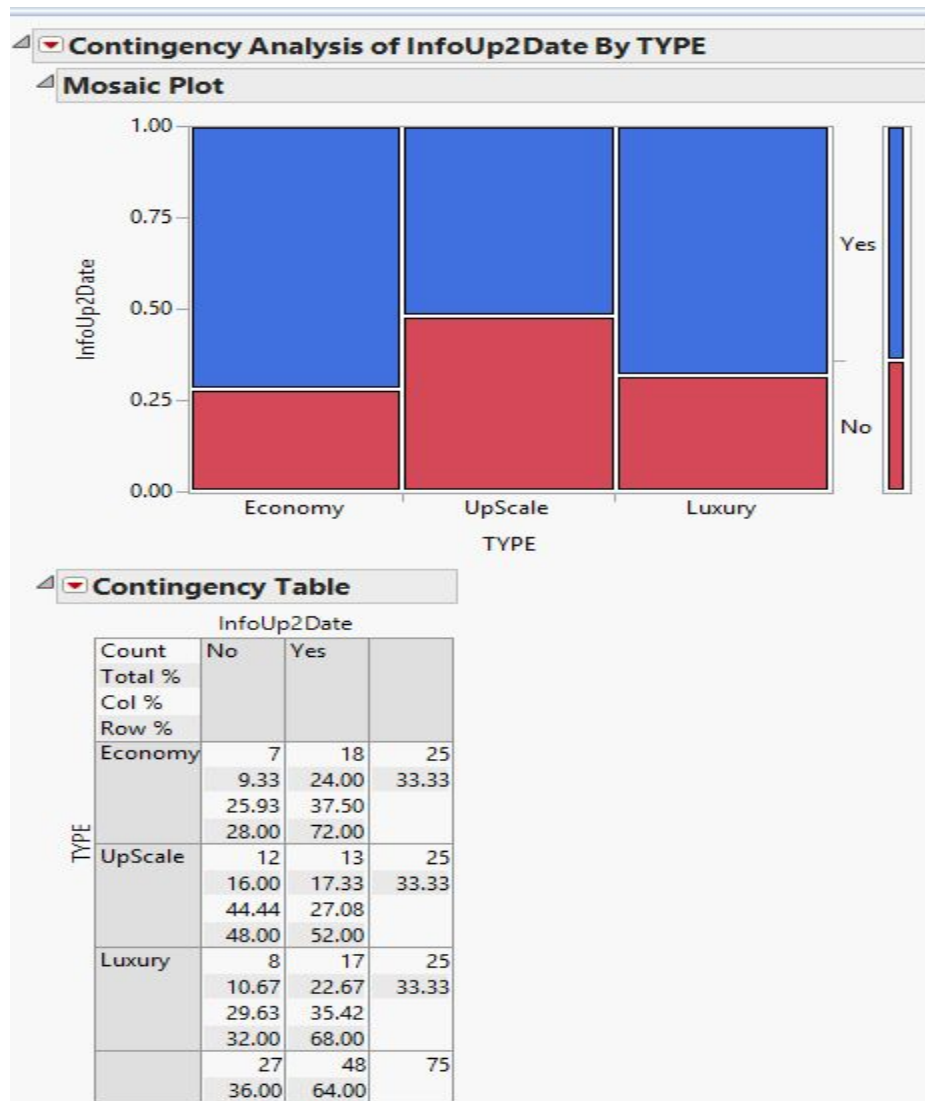
**"Information Up-To-Date"**



**Figure 21 Contingency Analysis Information Up-To-Date by Type**

**Figure 22 Information Up-To-Date ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 14 and 14.1 suggests that there were no considerable difference for keeping information up to date among the three brand classifications.
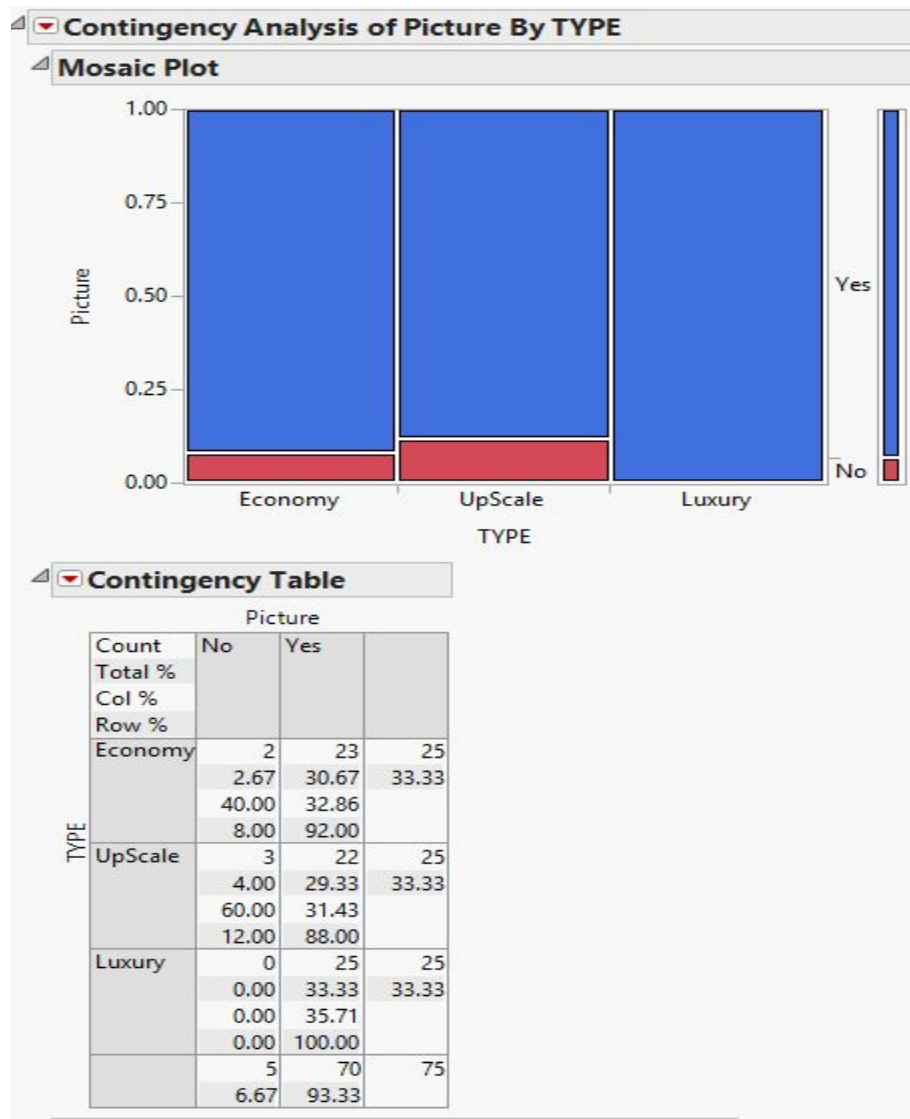
**"Picture"**



**Contingency Analysis of Picture By TYPE**

**Mosaic Plot**

**Contingency Table**

| Count<br>Total %<br>Col %<br>Row % | No | Yes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economy | 2<br>2.67<br>40.00<br>8.00 | 23<br>30.67<br>32.86<br>92.00 | 25<br>33.33 |
| UpScale | 3<br>4.00<br>60.00<br>12.00 | 22<br>29.33<br>31.43<br>88.00 | 25<br>33.33 |
| Luxury | 0<br>0.00<br>0.00<br>0.00 | 25<br>33.33<br>35.71<br>100.00 | 25<br>33.33 |
| | 5<br>6.67 | 70<br>93.33 | 75 |

**Figure 23 Contingency Analysis Picture by Type**

**Figure 24 Picture ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 15 and 15.1 showed that when using the item "Picture," there were no significant differences.

**"Video and Slides"**
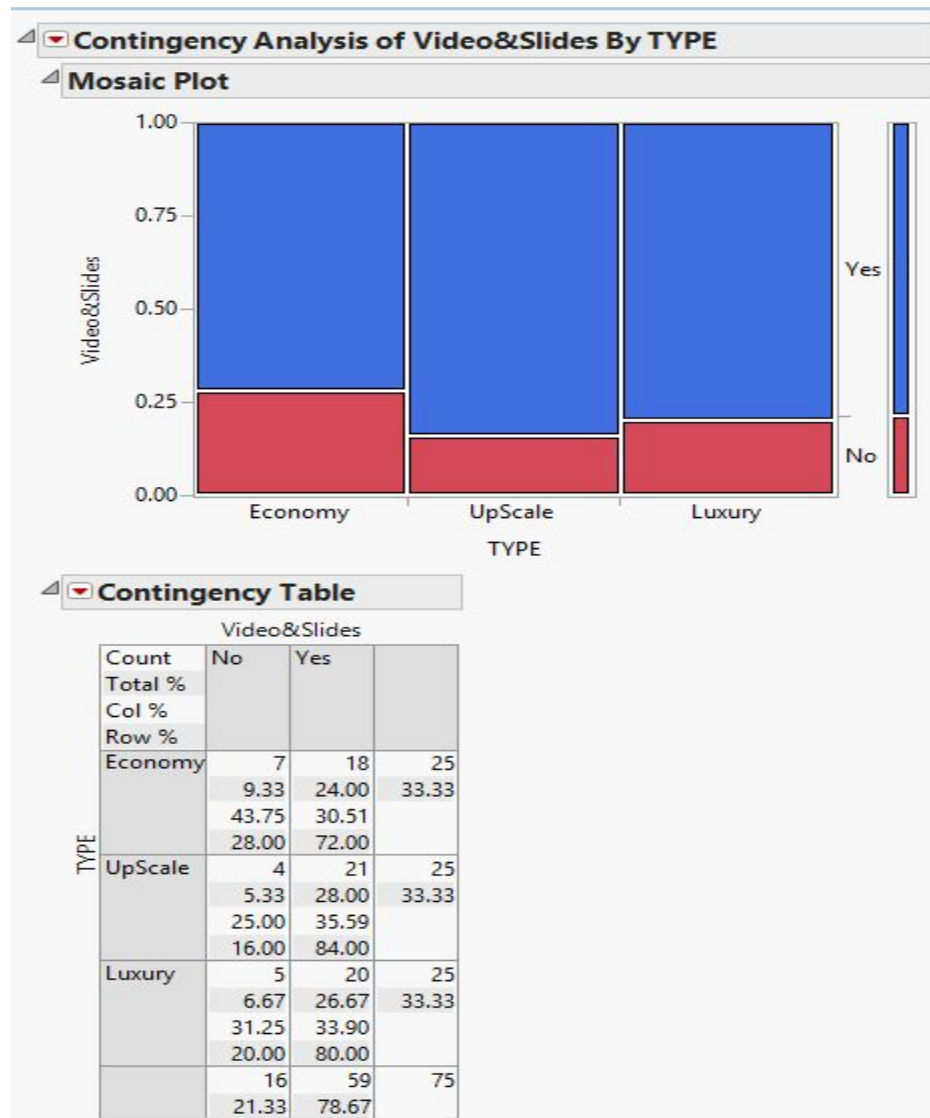


**Figure 25 Contingency Analysis Video and Slides by Type**

**Figure 26 Video and Slides ChiSquare Tests**

There was no substantive difference for using video and slides among the three hotel classifications.

**"Applications"**
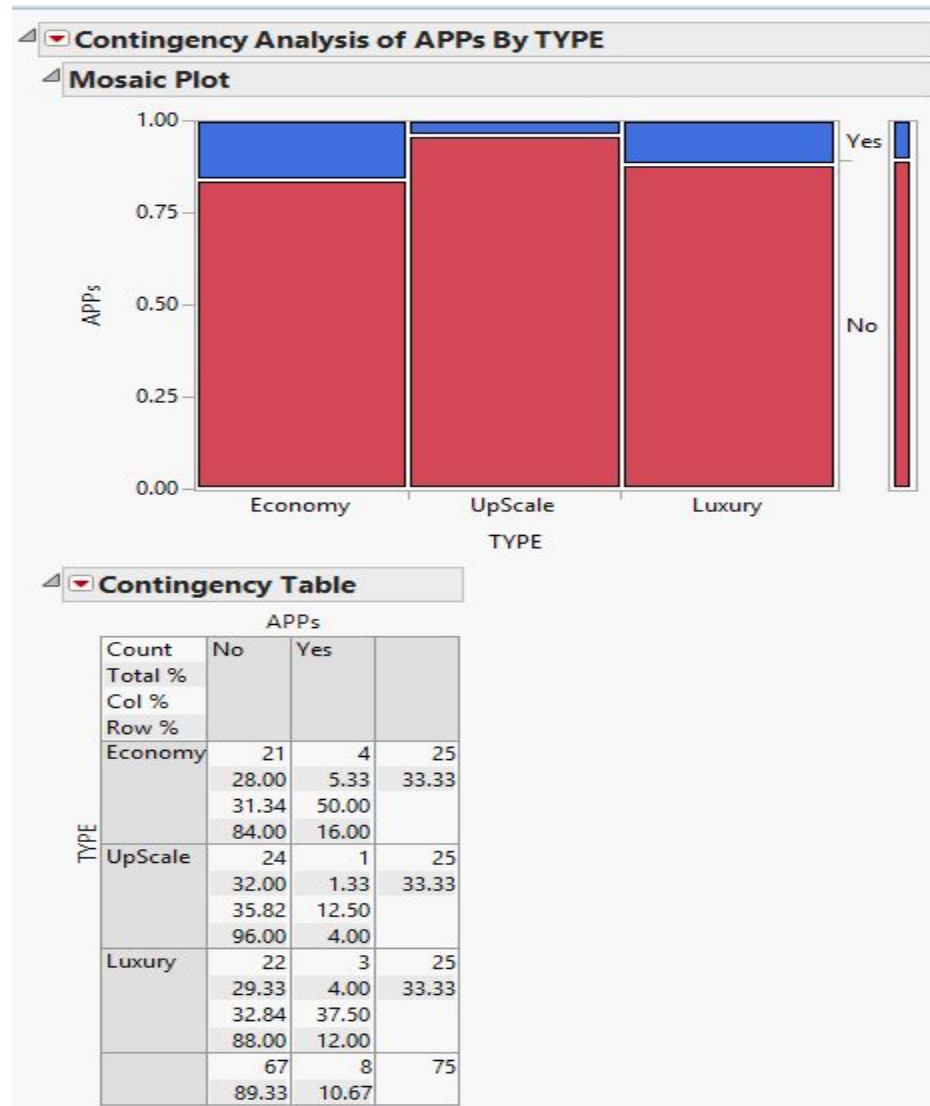


**Figure 27 Contingency Analysis Applications by Type**

**Figure 28 Applications ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 17 and 17.1 presented with no significant discrepancy among hotels when using various applications on social media.

**"Integration of Social Channels"**
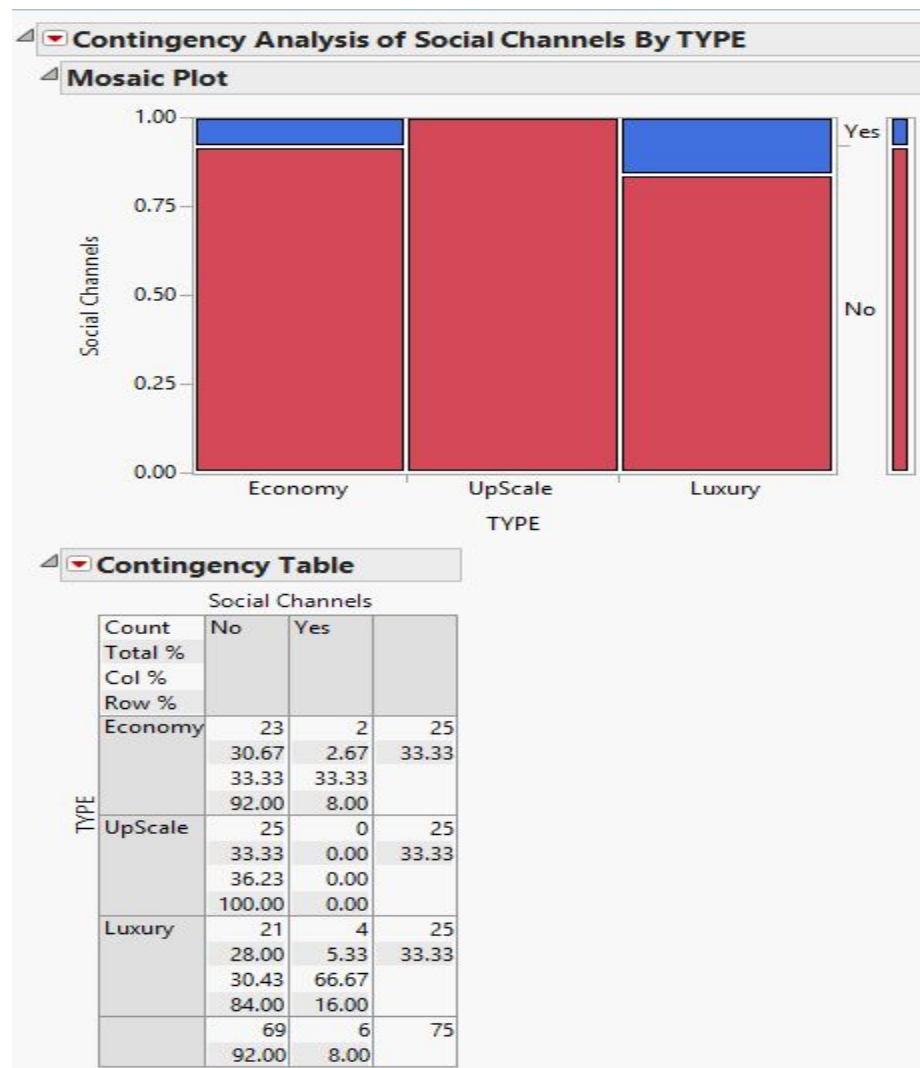


**Figure 29 Contingency Analysis Integrations of Social Channels by Type**

**Figure 30 Integration of Social Channels ChiSquare Tests**

There is no significant difference for using social channels among the three hotel classifications.

**"Sharing News"**
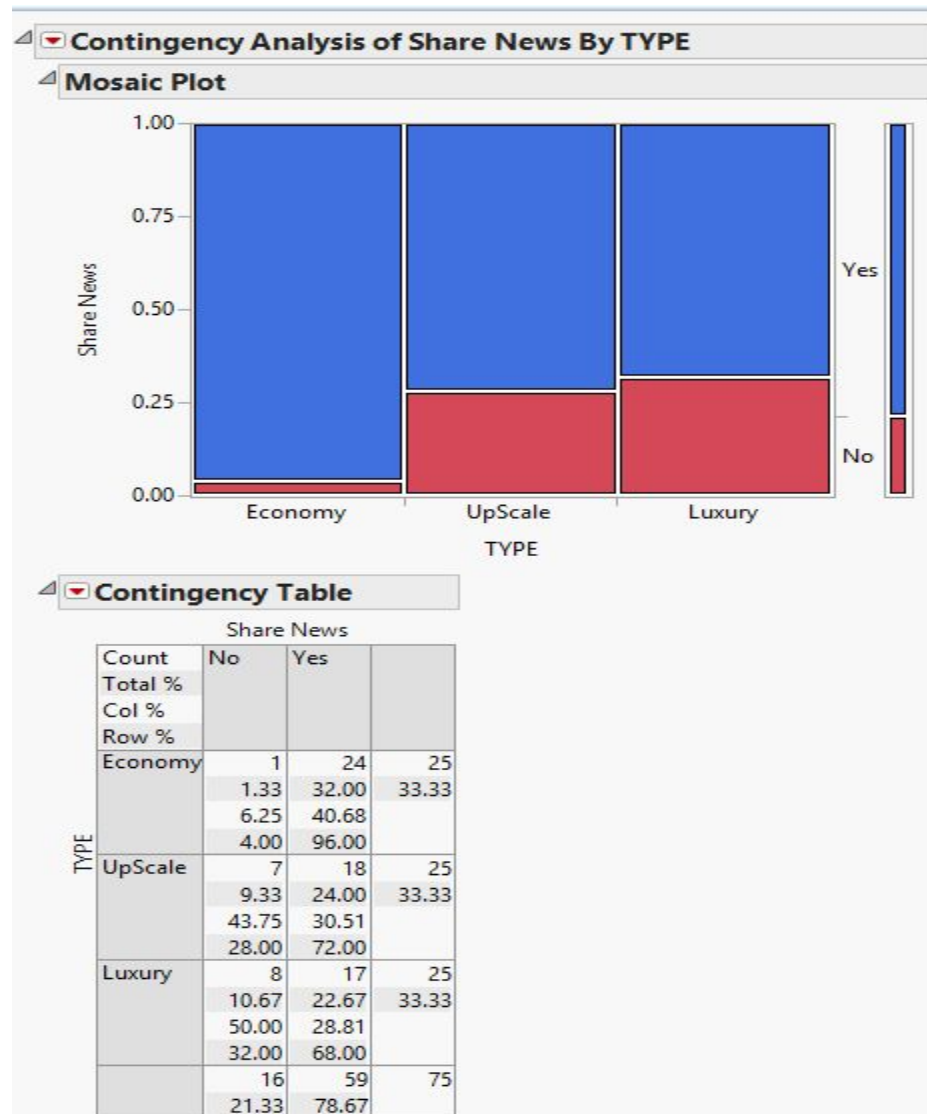


**Figure 31 Contingency Analysis Sharing News by Type**

**Figure 32 Sharing News Chi-Square Tests**

Item "Share News" used a probability of greater than 0.01 as seen in Figure 19. Figure 19.1 shows that there was a significant variance when sharing interesting news between the three brand classifications. The most noteworthy disparity is the economy brand.

**"Sharing Fan Content"**
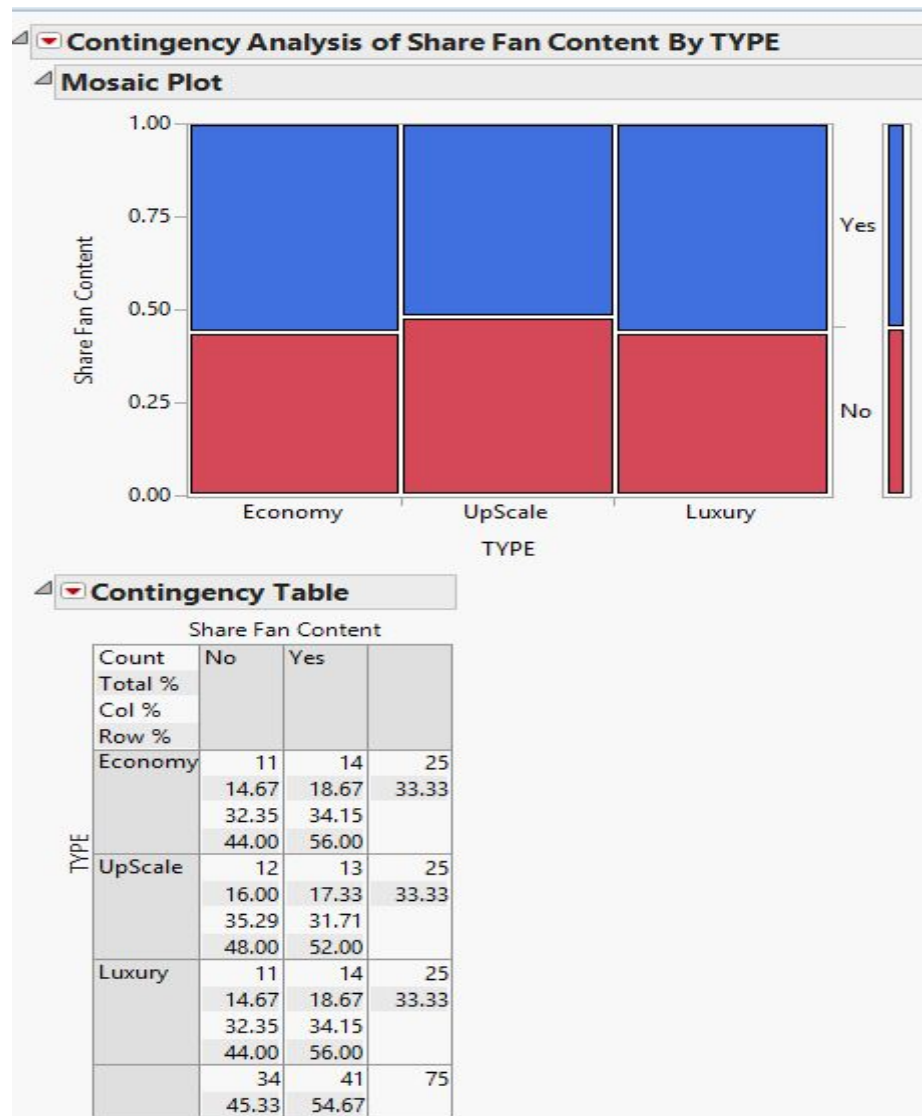


**Figure 33 Contingency Analysis Sharing Fan Content by Type**

**Figure 34 Sharing Fan Content ChiSquare Tests**

As shown by Figures 20 and 20.1, there was no significant difference when sharing a fan's content among the different brands.

**"Involve Customers"**



**Contingency Analysis of Involve Customers By TYPE**

**Mosaic Plot**

**Contingency Table**

| Count<br>Total %<br>Col %<br>Row % | No | Yes | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economy | 10 | 15 | 25 |
| | 13.33 | 20.00 | 33.33 |
| | 33.33 | 33.33 | |
| | 40.00 | 60.00 | |
| UpScale | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| | 14.67 | 18.67 | 33.33 |
| | 36.67 | 31.11 | |
| | 44.00 | 56.00 | |
| Luxury | 9 | 16 | 25 |
| | 12.00 | 21.33 | 33.33 |
| | 30.00 | 35.56 | |
| | 36.00 | 64.00 | |
| | 30 | 45 | 75 |
| | 40.00 | 60.00 | |
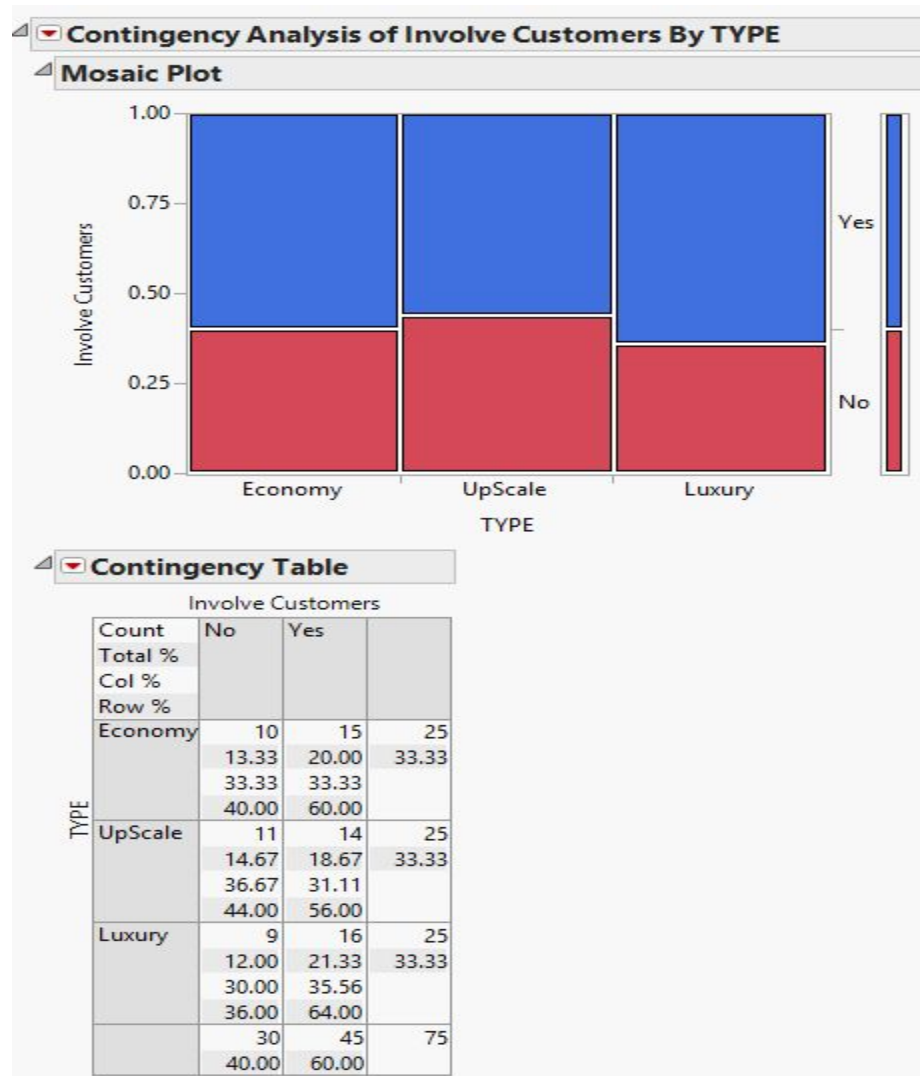
**Figure 35 Contingency Analysis Involve Customers by Type**

**Figure 36 Involve Customers ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 21 and Figure 21.1 show that when the brands involve their customers on social media, there was no substantial variation.

**"Fill-In-The-Blank"**
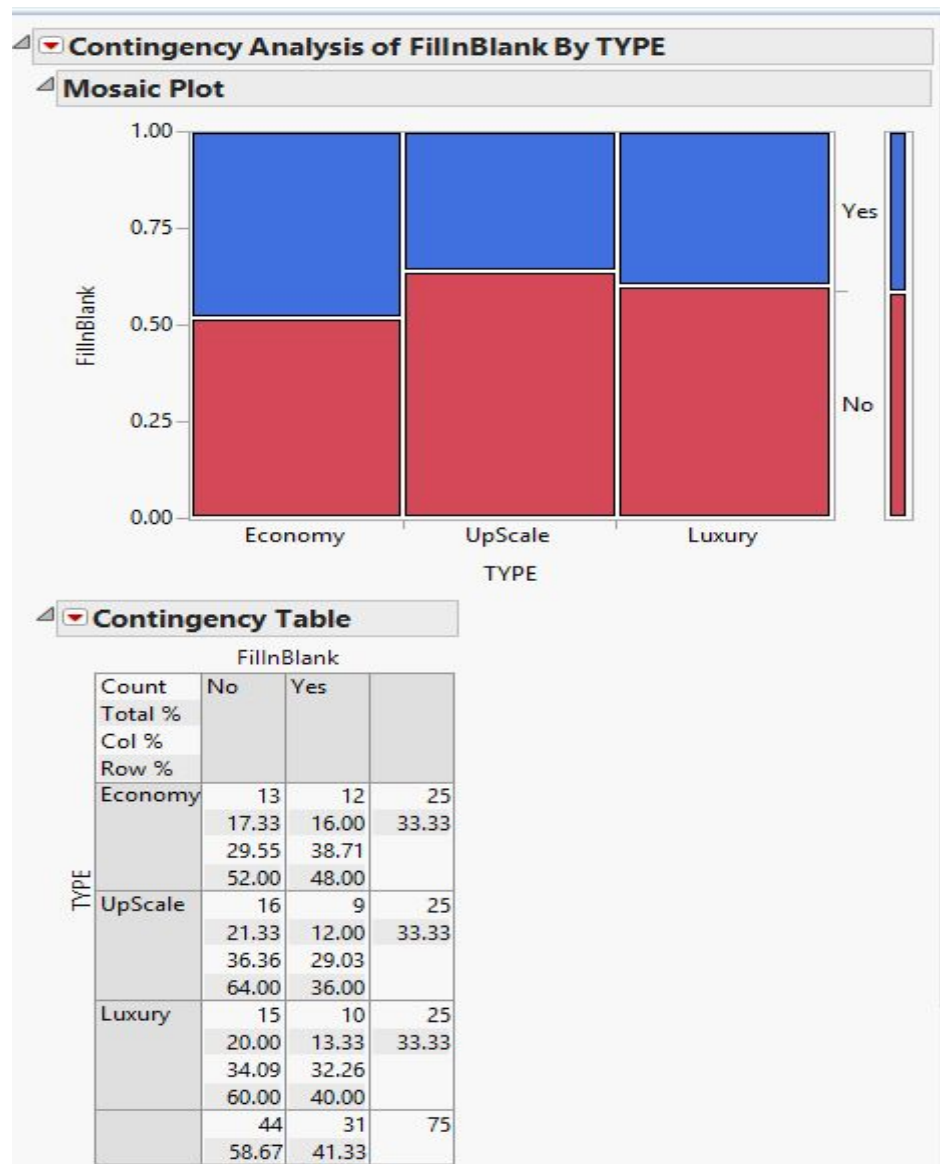


**Figure 37 Contingency Analysis Fill-In-The-Blank by Type**

**Figure 38 Fill-In-The-Blank ChiSquare Tests**

Figures 22 and 22.1 indicate that there was no variance between the three brand categories when using fill-in-the-blank posts.

**"Customer Captioning Picture"**
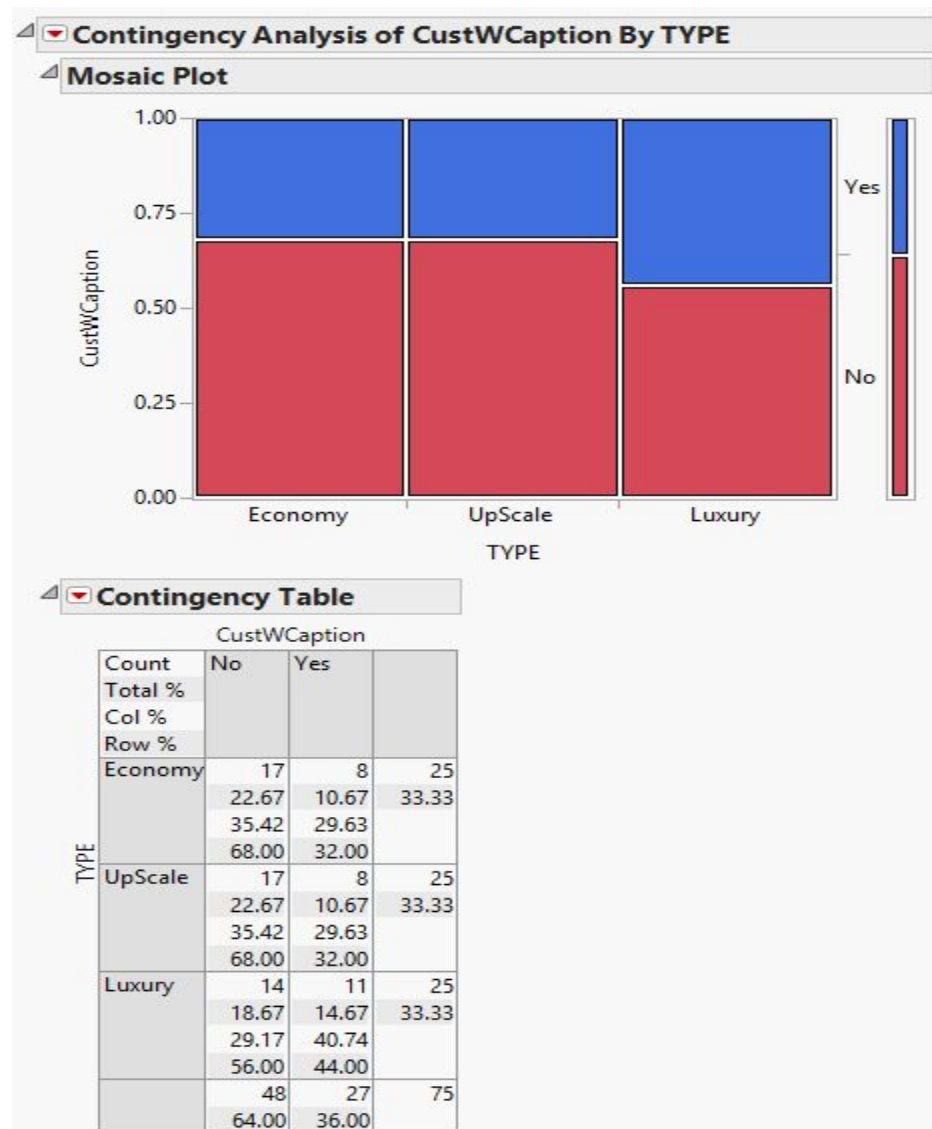


**Figure 39 Contingency Analysis Customer Captioning Picture by Type**

**Figure 40 Customer Captioning Picture ChiSquare Tests**

When allowing customers to caption statuses or pictures, the research could find no significant dissimilarities between brand categories.

**"Using Quotes"**
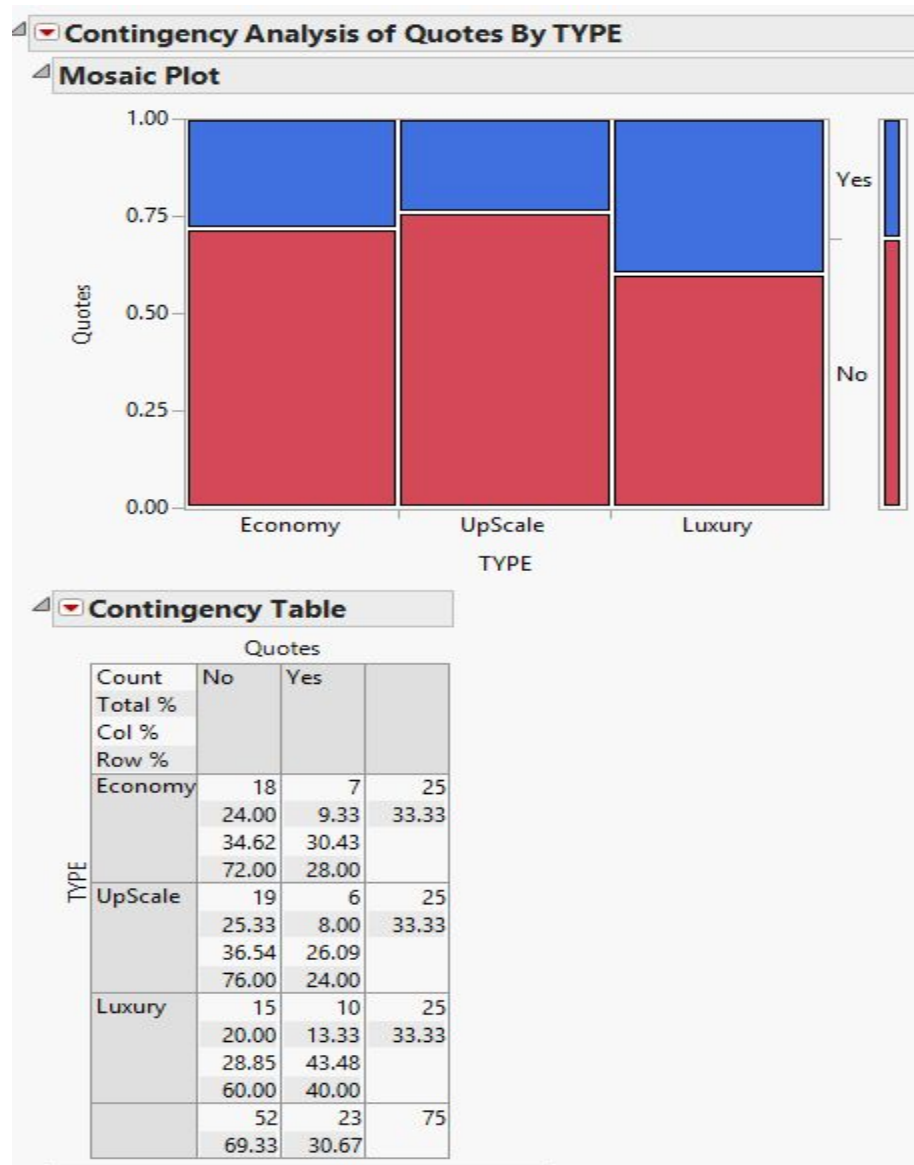


**Figure 41 Contingency Analysis Using Quotes by Type**

**Figure 42 Using Quotes ChiSquare Tests**

Figure 24 and 24.1 show that there was no discrepancy between brands when utilizing quotes on social media postings.

**"Likes and Shares"**
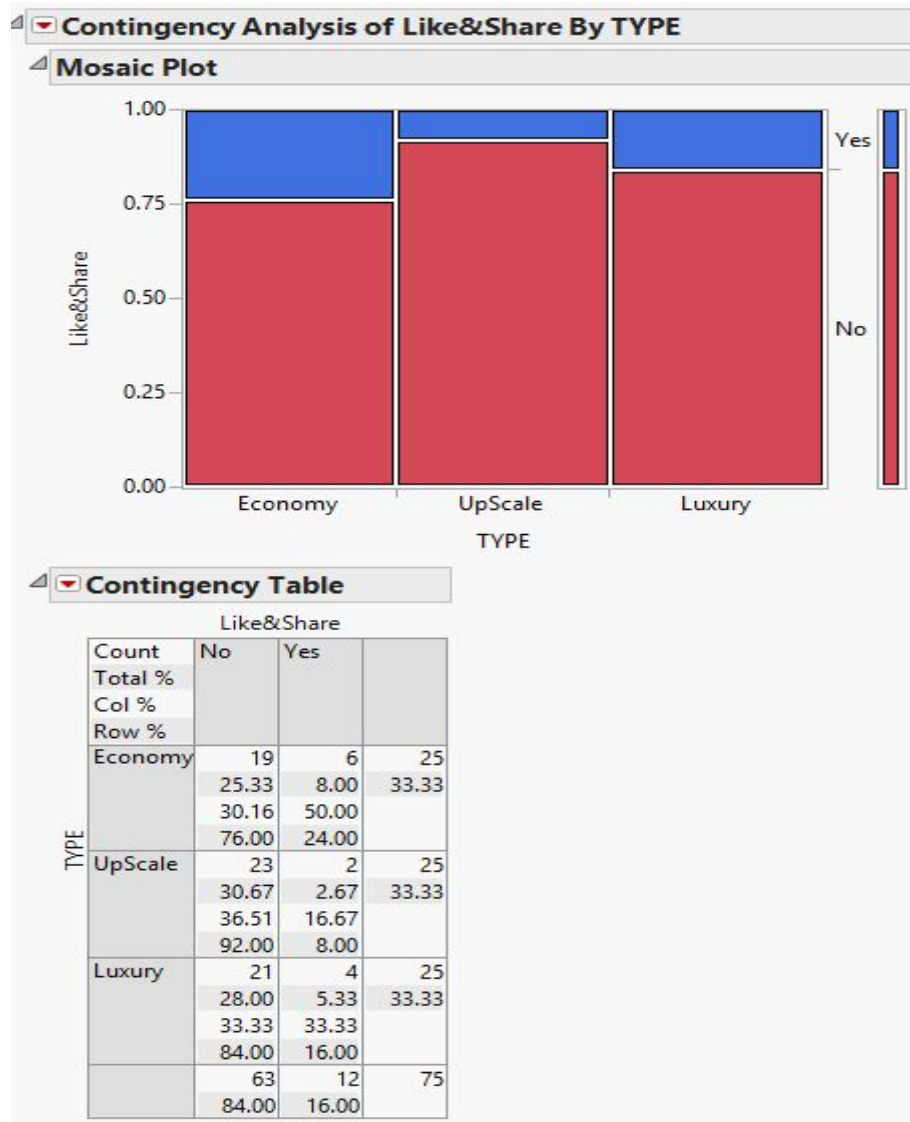


**Figure 43 Contingency Analysis Likes and Shares by Type**

**Figure 44 Likes and Shares ChiSquare Tests**

When brands used "Likes" and "Shares," the research found that there was no major variation between the three types.

## Chapter 5

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusion**

The goal of this study was to analyze the usage rate of Facebook features and tools by hotel companies. The purpose was to determine whether there were significant differences among hotel brands, namely luxury, upscale and economy, on the methods in which they employed Facebook. Nineteen (19) variables were identified as being important attributes to the effective use of Facebook, retrieved from a comprehensive literature review. The hypothesis stated that, there would be no significant difference in usage of 19 Facebook attributes by luxury, upscale and economy brands. The research used JMP software to calculate P-values and then used distribution charts to see the usage ratios of every attribute.

A chi square analysis concluded that among 19 attributes, only one item "sharing interesting news" received a P-value that was smaller than 0.1, which indicated a significant difference among the luxury, upscale and economy hotel brands. Item "Share News" used a probability of greater than 0.01 as seen in Figure 19, indicating that there were significant differences when sharing interesting news between the three brand

classifications. The most noteworthy disparity was in the economy brand. Though we did not collect information about the causes of this disparity, we suspect that the luxury and upscale hotels would more likely to spend more money on reputation management, sharing interesting news unrelated to promotion to connect to customers.

The hypotheses on the remaining 18 attributes were all categorically accepted since all the P-values were larger than 0.1, which indicated that there were no significant differences among the three classifications with respect to 18 attributes.

Although the P-values of the remaining 18 variables presented no significant statistical differences among the three classifications of hotel brands, we can still learn much from the contingency tables presented in Chapter 4 with respect to the extend too which hotel companies used or did not use Facebook features. Table 2 shows all the Facebook attributes and the frequency of each variable. The ratio was defined as the number of 'Yes' dividing (n=75) for each attribute. It shows the percentage of using a certain attribute.

Table 2 showed the 9 attributes in luxury, upscale and economy hotel classifications with usage ratios of larger than 50%.

**Table 2. 9 Attributes with the Usage Ratio in Different Classifications**

| Attributes | Luxury (Usage ratios) | Upscale (Usage ratios) | Economy (Usage ratios) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Logo | 88% | 80% | 84% |
| Event Desc | 68% | 64% | 72% |
| Contests & Promo | 88% | 88% | 88% |
| InfoUp2date | 68% | 52% | 72% |
| Picture | 100% | 88% | 92% |
| Video & Slides | 80% | 84% | 72% |
| Share News | 68% | 72% | 96% |
| Share Fan Content | 56% | 52% | 56% |
| Involve Customers | 64% | 56% | 60% |

Table 3 showed the  10 attributes in luxury, upscale and economy hotel classifications with usage ratios of smaller than 50%.

**Table 3. 10 Attributes with the Usage Ratio in different classifications**

| Attributes | Luxury (Usage ratios) | Upscale (Usage ratios) | Economy (Usage ratios) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ecommerce | 24% | 12% | 10.9% |
| Use Fan Name | 24% | 24% | 28% |
| Ez2Share | 21.3% | 12% | 32% |
| Complaint121 | 20% | 8% | 12% |
| Apps | 12% | 4% | 16% |
| Social Channels | 16% | 0% | 8% |
| Fill-in-the-Blank | 40% | 36% | 48% |
| Customer With Caption | 44% | 32% | 32% |
| Quotes | 40% | 24% | 28% |
| Like& Share | 16% | 8% | 24% |

Table 4 shows the 19 attributes with the calculated usage ratio in total and organized

by descending order in the table.

**Table 4. 19 Attributes with the Usage Ratio in Different Classification**

| Attributes | Usage Ratios | Attributes | Usage Ratios | Attributes | Usage Ratios |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture | 93.3% | Contests & Promo | 88% | Logo | 84% |
| Video & Slides | 78.6% | Share News | 78.6% | Event Desc | 68% |
| InfoUp2date | 64% | Involve Customers | 60% | Share Fan Content | 54.6% |

| Fill-in-the-Blank | 41.3% | Customer With Caption | 36% | Quotes | 30.6% |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Use Fan Name | 25.3% | Ez2Share | 21.3% | Ecommerce | 20% |
| Like& Share | 16% | Complaint121 | 13.3% | Apps | 10.6% |
| Social Channels | 8% | | | | |

Based on the numbers above, the majority (over 75%) of hotels used the following four attributes:

●Picture

●Contests & Promo

●Logo

●Videos & Slides

The nine moderately (between 26% to 74%) used items were:

● Share News

● Event Descriptions

●Information Up to Date

●Involve Customers

●Share Fan Content

●Fill in the Blank

●Customers with Captions

●Quotes

●Use Fan Name

The six smallest ratios (less than 25%) were the least used items:

● Social Channels

●Apps

●Complaint 121

● Like & Share

●Easy to Share

●E-Commerce

Posting pictures received the highest usage rate. One might conclude that posting pictures is relatively easy and fast. It also involved low labor cost and helps to build a vivid image for fans. Many hotels posted pictures of the hotel surroundings, their advanced facilities in the fitness center, attractive pictures of menu items served in the restaurants, or interesting activities held. These pictures would definitely make the hotels seem real and vivid.

The main objective of incorporating contests & promotions is generating revenues. Besides traditional advertising, posting information related to advertisings is more efficient due to the sheer number of people that log into Facebook every day. Also, posting promotions on a Facebook webpage is low cost compared to a TV or magazine ads. This seems to be a primary motivation for most hotel companies to use Facebook to share updated information and their new products.

Logos are a symbol of a hotel brand. Facebook pages with visible and identifiable logos are not difficult to insert. They are readily available; add to the credibility of the

web page; and help to build the public image for a hotel brand. Pictures and words were not only heavily utilized, but videos and slides were also a popular format to post to the Facebook web page. Like pictures, adding videos and slides also costs very little and avoids boring the fans.

Among the 19 items, addressing customer complaints one-to-one, incorporating Facebook applications, likes, and share were minimally used. Addressing customer complaints one-to-one received a usage ration of 15 percent. One can assume that many managers were not yet ready to reveal much about the customers' complaints publicly in order to protect the brand's reputation. It was also possible that once they dealt with a problem, they deleted the complaint to avoid other fans from seeing it. Other managers may avoid addressing complaints on the public webpage so they may use phone calls or emails to contact the customers directly.

Apps also received a low usage ratio (11 percent). Adding apps to the website requires financial and technological commitment. Hotel companies need to spend money on purchasing the applications and utilize technology to integrate the apps into the webpage.

Although social media has gotten the attention of many industries, including the hotel segment, the return on investment (ROI) in social media is cumbersome to calculate. For the item Likes & Shares, according to Amanda Webb (2012), most liked and shares images do not add value to the brand. They are just heavy-handed bad advertisement. Someone liking the page does not mean that they would like to hear from you on a long-term basis. In other words, liking or sharing the posts does not equate to a development of

loyalty to the brand. Knowing that you got someone to share your image 100 times could be meaningless because they most likely just share it and go (Webb, 2012).

**Recommendations for Future Studies**

The analysis of the Facebook features utilized by hotel properties in various brands within the study's sample population provides some insight as which attributes are commonly, moderately, or minimally incorporated to the Facebook pages of hotels. We provided some anecdotes for the support of the findings. However, Further research could scientifically determine the reason why specific attributes are rarely used.

This study's findings did not reveal any significant differences among luxury, upscale, and economy hotels, except in one item, "sharing news." We could not explain the reason for this divergence. Additionally we related the use and or lack thereof usage to financial and availability of expertise. Are these really the main reasons?

For this study we analyzed three distinct classes, namely luxury, upscale, and economy hotels. Future investigators could complete studies, such as getting the best models for hotels in all other classifications as well.

The study mainly utilized hotel classifications as independent variables. Could utilizing Facebook features by hotel properties be dependent on other measures, such as the size of a property, number of employees, location, the property's customer demographics and/or other factors? Finally, for this study we did not classify the sample based on franchise, chain, or independent hotel designations. Other might address the significant statistic differences between various ownership types.

## LIMITATIONS

1. For primary research, the author viewed a number of articles and published manuscripts. It is not possible to read all articles related to Facebook engagement. Points of view in the articles were limited. The 19 items were identified based on the author's judgment, to be the most relevant to lodging industry. Other researchers may compile a different set of variables, as the social media technology is growing and changing rapidly.

2. The author picked content from August 1st to December 31st in 2013, on each Facebook site. It is not possible to see all contents a hotel company has posted and record day-to-day changes. Generally, many hotels updated their Facebook website with very low frequency. Some information was old and out of date. For some of the hotel brand's Facebook sites, the total number of posts was less than 10, so all there was to consider were the few content posts.

3. The finding of this thesis just indicated how hotel brands in different classification used Facebook during the study's period; a longitudinal study might find a more comprehensive results. Finally, the percentage use of every attribute was calculated during a certain period, and reflected the current situation on the way they deployed Facebook. The author cannot predict what will happened to Facebook in the future, so the conclusions of this research are considered effective for a giving period of time.

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