



Boost Hospitality Management through Social Media: Applications in Higher Education

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Abstract

Hospitality industry, often referred to as a "people industry", constitutes a fiercely competitive and leading industry of the global economy, which relies heavily on its employees to deliver high-quality services and keep customers satisfied. In this sense of global context, hospitality management skills are acknowledged as a crucial element of business success, in the attempt to provide outstanding experiences and differentiate from competitors. On the other hand, the ever changing evolution and the continuous emergence of new technologies, transform not only the customer demands but the daily habits of human population, in general. Social media is already recognized as a powerful marketing tool, embedded in the daily life, particularly for people of young age, who are reported to be strongly influenced by such applications. These young people are frequently students, which consequently resulted in now seriously viewing social media even as a useful tool for various educational procedures and purposes. Its application in hospitality education ranges from limited to wide, including the promotion of hospitality management skills. This paper draws on existing literature aiming to summarize the hospitality management skills that may be promoted through the applications of social media in educational procedures and explore how it may be further employed in this regard.

Keywords: hospitality management, educational tools, hospitality education, soft skills, social media

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of tourism and hospitality industries has created a growing demand for skilled professionals, placing in turn significant responsibility on educational institutions, which are now expected to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in the industry (Kim, Jung & Wang, 2016; Bagon, Samillano & Tinapay, 2023). Given the competitive nature of the field, employers increasingly expect graduates to be multi-skilled, requiring proficiency in hospitality management to ensure professional success (Bagon et al., 2023;

Mesa, 2023). This expectation underscores the necessity for educational programs to integrate a diverse set of skills that align with industry needs (Ramirez, 2021).

2. Research Objectives and Methodology

The objective of this paper is to explore the role of social media as a transformative tool in higher education for enhancing hospitality management skills. Given the increasing reliance on digital platforms, this research investigates how social media applications can be strategically integrated into hospitality education to boost professional skills and industry preparedness. The study specifically aims to identify the core hospitality management skills that can be effectively developed through social media-based learning in educational settings and focuses on analyzing the applications of SM as an interactive and experiential learning tool to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and industry expectations. Further, the research evaluates the practical applications of social media in hospitality education, assessing the potential of social media in fostering professional networking, career readiness, and innovation in hospitality management training. In addition, it assesses the integration of social media in educational curricula, identifying challenges, opportunities, and best practices in integrating social media within hospitality education curricula to maximize its effectiveness in skill-building and career preparation. By synthesizing findings from previous research, this study aims to highlight trends, opportunities, and limitations in the application of social media as an educational tool and seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on the digitalization of education and its implications for the future workforce in the evolving landscape of hospitality industry.

In order to carry out this extensive review, the authors benefited mainly from Google Scholar to access various accredited publication databases, like Elsevier, Emerald Insight, and Taylor Francis, and cover related publications to explore the intersection of social media and hospitality education. Keywords such as 'hospitality management', 'social media in education', 'hospitality skills development', and 'digital learning tools' were used to find relevant articles. The selection prioritized publications from 2010 to 2024 to include recent advancements and trends in the field. Data sources consisted of peer-reviewed academic journals, industry reports, and case studies from educational programs. The inclusion criteria focused on studies that explored the intersection of social media and educational practices in higher education, ensuring relevance and reliability. Despite offering valuable insights into the role of social media in hospitality education and hospitality management, this study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. Primarily, it relies on secondary data, drawing from existing literature rather than primary research methods such as surveys or interviews, reflecting the perspectives and methodologies of previously published studies. Additionally, the rapid evolution of technology poses a challenge, as social media platforms and their functionalities continuously change, potentially rendering some insights outdated over time. Moreover, contextual factors such as geographical, institutional, and cultural differences may influence the applicability of the findings, limiting the generalizability of the study's conclusions. From an ethical perspective, the study adheres to rigorous academic integrity standards by ensuring proper attribution and citation of all referenced works.

3. Hospitality Management Skills

Despite completing their studies, many graduates often find themselves inadequately prepared to transition seamlessly into the workforce. Extensive training is typically required to help them function effectively in business environments, suggesting that academic curricula may not be sufficiently aligned with practical industry demands (Dhiman, 2012;

Bagon et al., 2023). This gap in preparedness reinforces the argument that institutions must prioritize not only theoretical knowledge but also hands-on experience to better equip students for their roles. The responsibility of preparing graduates to meet workforce demands is increasingly being placed on educational institutions (Signe et al., 2021; Gevana & Tan, 2023), which are expected to produce highly competent graduates with the necessary skills to contribute to efficient business operations in the hospitality sector (Umbreit, 1993; Christou, 2002). The hospitality industry is a dynamic sector that requires a diverse skill set from its workforce.

Research indicates that communication, both oral and written, is one of the most essential skills for hospitality professionals, as effective communication skills facilitate customer interactions, teamwork, and operational efficiency (Baum, 1991; Mitchell, Skinner & White, 2010; Kay et al., 2000; Gursoy & Swanger, 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Coffelt, Grauman & Smith, 2019; Prashanti, 2019; Briones, Apat, Lorica & Valenzuela, 2021; Tanković, Kapeš & Kraljić, 2021; Marneros, Papageorgiou & Efstathiades, 2022). In addition, creative and critical thinking are valuable skills that enable employees to develop innovative solutions to problems and enhance service quality (Moscardo, 1997; Kay et al., 2000; Gustin, 2001; O'Mahony et al., 2001; Ravitz, 2014; Marco, Garcia, Maliksi, Pampolina & Ching, 2022). Decision-making skills are equally crucial, as hospitality employees often need to make quick, effective decisions in high-pressure environments (Sisso et al., 2013; Juntarangs, 2020; Marneros et al., 2022; Bagon et al., 2023). Furthermore, emotional intelligence plays a significant role in hospitality by allowing employees to manage interpersonal relationships effectively (Tesone et al., 2006; Chu & Murrmann, 2012; Weber et al., 2013; Briones et al., 2021; Piol, 2023). Ethical behavior is also emphasized, ensuring that professionals maintain integrity and adhere to industry standards (Gursoy et al., 2005; Acosta et al., 2017; Marco et al., 2022; Marneros et al., 2022). Human relations and leadership skills contribute to a productive work environment and enable employees to take on managerial roles (Kay & Russette, 2000; De Villiers, 2010; Bathla et al., 2019). Problem-solving abilities, teamwork, and self-management are additional skills that allow professionals to adapt to the fast-paced nature of the hospitality sector (Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Christou et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2024). Moreover, hospitality industry places significant emphasis on professionalism, professional appearance, and service orientation, because such skills may enhance customer satisfaction, improve workplace culture, and contribute to employee success in hospitality careers (Tesone et al., 2006; Christou et al., 2019; Silva, Soares, Pataco Oliveira, Silva, & Silva, 2022).

Language skills are crucial in the industry due to its international nature. Professionals must often communicate with guests from diverse linguistic backgrounds, making multilingual abilities an asset (Saad et al., 2016; Christou et al., 2019; Signe et al., 2021). Similarly, technology skills have become increasingly important as the industry adopts digital solutions for reservations, customer service, and operations management (Ravitz, 2014; Prashanti, 2019; Juntarangs, 2020). Additionally, expertise in various hotel operations, including front desk management, housekeeping, and food service, is fundamental to running a successful hospitality business (Sisson & Adams, 2013; Weber et al., 2013; Christou et al., 2019). These skills require hands-on experience and practical training to master. The essential skills pertinent to hospitality management, as identified in relevant researches, are summarized in the table below (See Table 1).

Table 1. Hospitality management skills

Hospitality Management Skills	Sources
Communication (Oral & Written)	(Baum, 1991; Kay et al., 2000; Gursoy & Swanger, 2005; Raybould & Wilkins, 2006; Tesone & Ricci, 2006; Ravitz, 2014; Saad & Ali, 2016; Acosta, Igarashi, Olfindo, & Rutkowski, 2017; Christou et al., 2019; Coffelt, Grauman, & Smith, 2019; Prashanti, 2019; Juntarangs, 2020; Briones, Apat, Lorica, & Valenzuela, 2021; Gevana & Tan, 2021; Signe et al., 2021; Marneros et al., 2022; Bagon et al., 2023; Mesa, 2023; Hussain et al., 2024)
Creative Thinking	(Moscardo, 1997; Kay et al., 2000; Ravitz, 2014; Gevana et al., 2021; Signe et al., 2021)
Critical Thinking	(Kay et al., 2000; Ravitz, 2014; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Juntarangs, 2020; Signe et al., 2021)
Decision Making	(Juntarangs, 2020; Marneros et al., 2022; Bagon et al., 2023; Mesa, 2023; Piol, 2023)
Emotional Intelligence	(Tesone et al., 2006; Chu & Murrmann, 2012; Delcourt, Gremler, Van Riel, & Van Birgelen, 2016; Bagon et al., 2023; Mesa, 2023; Piol, 2023; Hussain, Soni, & Shah, 2024)
Ethics	(Gursoy et al., 2005; Acosta et al., 2017; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Tanković et al., 2021; Marneros et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2022; Mesa, 2023)
Human Relations	(Kay & Russette, 2000; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Gevana et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2021; Tanković et al., 2021; Marco et al., 2022; Maliksi, Pampolina, & Delon Ching, 2022; Marneros et al., 2022; Bagon et al., 2023)
Information Management	(Raybould et al., 2006; Marneros et al., 2022)
Interpersonal Skills	(Kay et al., 2000; Raybould et al., 2006; Sisson et al., 2013; Weber et al., 2013; Kriegl, 2015; Bathla et al., 2019; Acosta et al., Loreto, 2020; Juntarangs, 2020; Briones et al., 2021; Marco et al., 2022)
Language Skills	(Saad et al., 2016; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Signe et al., 2021)
Leadership	(Kay et al., 2000; Gursoy et al., 2005; Raybould et al., 2006; Sisson et al., 2013; Weber et al., 2013; Kriegl, 2015; Juntarangs, 2020; Briones et al., 2021; Marco et al., 2022; Marneros et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2024)
Problem Solving	(Raybould et al., 2006; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Prashanti, 2019; Juntarangs, 2020; Gevana et al., 2021; Tirol, 2022; Bagon et al., 2023; Mesa, 2023; Hussain et al., 2024)
Professional Appearance & Professionalism	(Tesone et al., 2006; Christou et al., 2019; Ramirez, 2021; Marneros et al., 2022; Gursoy et al., 2005; Silva et al., 2022; Bagon et al., 2023)
Providing Service	(Gursoy et al., 2005; Bathla, Rana, & Singh, 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Tanković et al., 2021; Hussain et al., 2024)
Self-management, Self-direction & Self-discipline	(Raybould et al., 2006; Gevana et al., 2021; Ravitz, 2014; Signe et al., 2021; Christou et al., 2019)
Teamwork	(Gursoy et al., 2005; Raybould et al., 2006; Tesone et al., 2006; Ravitz, 2014; Bathla et al., 2019; Christou et al., 2019; Juntarangs, 2020; Gevana et al., 2021; Signe et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2022; Marneros et al., 2022; Mesa, 2023)
Technology Skills	(Ravitz, 2014; Prashanti, 2019; Juntarangs, 2020; Gevana et al., 2021; Signe et al., 2021)
Various Operations of a Hotel & Technical Skills	(Sisson & Adams, 2013; Weber, Crawford, Lee, Dennison, 2013; Christou et al., 2019; Marco et al., 2022; Marneros et al., 2022; Silva, Soares, Pataco, Oliveira, Silva, & Silva, 2022; Mesa, 2023; Kay et al., 2000; O'Mahony et al., 2001; Christou & Chatzigeorgiou, 2019; Prashanti, 2019; Signe, Belarma, Ceniza, & Capitan, 2021; Bagon et al., 2023)

4. Changes in Teaching and Learning

The ongoing development of technology has significantly transformed the educational landscape, making learning environments more interactive and dynamic. Educators now are able to implement various teaching and learning techniques that enhance student engagement and comprehension (Burbules & Callister, 2000; Rodriguez, 2011; Rerung, 2021; Bagon, et al., 2023). The integration of digital tools has not only diversified instructional methods but has also facilitated a more personalized learning experience, catering to the different needs and preferences of students (Dabbagh & Reo, 2010).

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this shift, necessitating the widespread adoption of remote teaching as an emergency response to school closures (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust & Bond, 2020; Rerung, 2021; Smith, 2021; Susanti & Hamka, 2024). Even after the pandemic, remote and hybrid learning models continue to be prevalent, shaping the future of education (Susanti & Hamka, 2024). This evolution aligns with the characteristics of younger generations, who have grown up in a technologically saturated world. Digital devices and SM has become integral to their daily lives (Briggs, 2020; Karasek & Hysa, 2020; Moczyłowska, 2020), influencing their expectations and engagement in higher education (Zhang, Flammer & Yang, 2010; Díaz-Baharona, 2020; Figueras Maz, Grandío Pérez & Mateus, 2021).

In the field of hospitality education, technology plays an even more crucial role due to the vocational nature of the courses. Hospitality students exhibit distinct learning styles compared to their peers in other disciplines, often favoring practical, hands-on experiences (Hsu, 2011). Research suggests that hospitality students tend to be more visually oriented, sensing, and persistent learners who actively engage with SM as a learning tool (Cranage, Lambert, Morais & Lane, 2006). This preference for experiential learning underscores the importance of integrating technology-based teaching strategies to enhance their educational experiences.

The integration of social media (SM) into education has become increasingly prevalent across multiple disciplines, reflecting its growing significance as an instructional tool (Hung & Yuen, 2010; Shaw, Sperber & Cunningham, 2016). Various academic fields have already adopted SM to enhance learning experiences, facilitate communication, and improve student engagement. In engineering, studies highlight that SM has been utilized to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among students and professionals (Anderson & Haddad, 2005; Looi, Chen & Ng, 2010; Yu & Liu, 2015; Qadir, 2023; Sabah, 2023). Similarly, healthcare and medicine have leveraged SM for educational purposes, particularly in medical training, knowledge dissemination, and patient engagement (Manhas & Kaur, 2018; Singla, Kumar & Badyal, 2020; Scott, 2020; de Lade et al., 2021; Sallam, 2023). In business education, SM serves as a powerful tool for enhancing marketing strategies and business communication (Geho & Dangelo, 2012). Platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter provide real-world applications that allow students to engage in professional networking and gain insights into industry trends (Barczyk & Duncan, 2011; Jiang, Lam, Chiu & Ho, 2023). Technology and science disciplines have also benefited from the integration of SM in the educational process. Online communities and interactive discussions have facilitated the sharing of scientific knowledge and technological advancements (Lu & Chen, 2011; Mardiana, 2016). In the field of linguistics, SM plays a crucial role in language learning and communication studies (Pratiwi, Huda & Kurniawan, 2021). Research suggests that platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have been instrumental in language acquisition, cross-cultural communication, and the study of linguistic trends (Laserna & Miguel, 2018; Siddig, 2020; Muftah, 2024). Hospitality education has also widely adopted SM to support

learning and professional development. Hospitality students benefit from SM in various ways, including networking, tourism marketing, and customer engagement (Isacson & Gretzel, 2011; Caiwei et al., 2014; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar & Kasem, 2018; Rerung, 2021; Smith, 2021; Anopchand, Mahdzar, Abd Gani & Isa, 2024).

5. Social Media in Education Field

SM tools possess an increasing role in education, with their widespread use for various purposes like interaction, resource sharing, and skill development (Mcewan, 2012). Several platforms that have been examined in the context of education, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube (Irwin, Ball, Desbrow & Leveritt, 2012), blogs, wikis (Blankenship, 2011), Instagram (Al-Sharqi, Kutbi & Hashim, 2016; Ibrahim, Norsaal, Abdullah & Othman, 2016), and TikTok (Duan, 2023; Sunanti et al., 2024). Additionally, other platforms such as WhatsApp, Google+ (Raiman, Antbring & Mahmood, 2017; Singla et al., 2020;), LinkedIn (Manhas et al., 2018), Telegram (Ibrahim et al., 2016), and Tencent QQ (Caiwei et al., 2014), have also been explored for educational purposes. The Table 2 provides a summary of indicative fields in which social media has been utilized within an educational context (See Table. 2).

Table 1. Fields of Social Media Application in Education

Education fields	Sources
Engineering	(Yu & Liu, 2015; Ibrahim, Norsaal, Abdullah & Othman, 2016; Qadir, 2023; Sabah, 2023)
Healthcare & Medicine	(Burke, Snyder & Rager, 2009; Green & Hope, 2010; Clifton & Mann, 2011; Duncan, Yarwood-Ross & Haigh, 2013; Gon & Rawekar, 2017; Raiman, Antbring & Mahmood, 2017; Lopez & Cleary, 2018; Manhas & Kaur, 2018; Faeza, 2019; Javaeed, Kibria, Khan & Ghauri, 2020; Singla, Kumar & Badyal, 2020; Scott et al., 2020; de Lade et al., 2021; Khlaif, Z. N., & Salha, 2021; Sallam, 2023)
Business & Marketing	(Zhang, Flammer & Yang, 2010; Barczyk & Duncan, 2011; Lu & Chen, 2011; McCorkle & McCorkle, 2012; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar & Kasem, 2018; Oyedele & Oladeji, 2018; Faeza, 2019; Jiang, Lam, A. Chiu, & Ho, 2023)
Technology & Science	(Mardiana, 2016; Kustijono & Zuhri, 2018; Faeza, 2019)
Linguistics	(Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Laserna & Miguel, 2018; Siddig, 2020; Istifci & Ucar, 2021; Pratiwi, Huda & Kurniawan, 2021; Duan, 2023; Muftah, 2024)
Performing Arts	(DeWitt, Alias, Siraj, Yaakub, Ayob & Ishak, 2013; Figueras Maz, Grandío Pérez, & Mateus, 2021)
Sports Management	(López-Carril, Alguacil & Anagnostopoulos, 2022)
Hospitality	(Isacson & Gretzel, 2011; Caiwei et al., 2014; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar, & Kasem, 2018; Rerung, 2021; Smith, 2021; Anopchand, Mahdzar, Abd Gani, & Isa, 2024)

One significant attribute is that most SM is available free of charge (Caiwei et al., 2014; Niu, 2019; Rasheed Hasan, 2020), making them accessible to a large audience. Furthermore, these tools support the sharing of classroom resources (Smith, 2021), which can contribute to a more interactive learning environment. Platforms like Vimeo, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube facilitate live streaming sessions, encouraging interaction through chats and comments, fostering lively discussions, and enabling real-time Q&A sessions (Caiwei et al., 2014; Niu, 2019; Rasheed, 2020; Sunanti et al., 2024).

Online forums are also emphasized as valuable resources for developing new skills, exchanging ideas, and cultivating a culture of improvement (Lu & Chen, 2011; Balakrishnan, Teoh, Pourshafie & Liew, 2017; Smith, 2021). Learning Management Systems (LMSs) such as Moodle, Canvas, and Blackboard (Kalelioğlu, 2017; Rasheed Hasan, 2020) support the integration of SM tools, ensuring that maximum benefits are achieved through their use and features.

Facebook is widely regarded as the most studied SM for educational purposes, largely due to its popularity among both students and educators (Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010; Caiwei et al., 2014; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020; Rerung, 2021). Its functions, primarily designed for personal communication, such as chatting, sharing media, and updating statuses (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Oyedele & Oladeji, 2018), also make it suitable for educational use. In the context of education, Facebook is used to share educational resources, facilitate communication with faculty, allow students to receive marks and feedback, and enable the delivery of assignments (Ventura & Quero, 2013; Rasheed Hasan, 2020). Despite these benefits, Facebook has been compared to traditional learning management systems (LMSs) like Blackboard, and some studies have found that it is less effective in certain educational contexts (Sánchez, Cortijo & Javed, 2014; Hamid, 2015; Kalelioğlu, 2017; Sadowski et al., 2017; Niu, 2019). However, other studies suggest that Facebook's group features, such as discussions and information exchange, provide significant benefits, offering enhanced collaboration, knowledge sharing, and interaction (Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Irwin, Ball, Desbrow & Leveritt, 2012; Bicen & Uzunboylu, 2013; Rasheed Hasan, 2020; Rerung, 2021). These features make Facebook a useful tool for activities such as in-class Q&A (Brady, Holcomb, & Smith, 2010; Yu & Liu, 2015). Furthermore, Facebook has been shown to encourage positive relationships among users with shared interests, which can enhance students' cognitive and social skills (West, Lewis, & Currie, 2009; Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2009; Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Bicen & Uzunboylu, 2013; Oktavia, Husda, & Suhardianto, 2019; Rerung, 2021).

YouTube is highlighted as a valuable educational tool, primarily used by educators to upload and share videos that complement classroom lessons. It is particularly useful for linking theory to practice and fostering deeper discussions on topics (Burke, Snyder & Rager, 2009; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar & Kasem, 2018). The platform simplifies understanding complex topics and accelerates deep learning by enhancing student engagement and increasing critical consciousness (Clifton & Mann, 2011; DeWitt et al., 2013; June, Yaacob & Kheng, 2014; Orús et al., 2016).

WhatsApp, on the other hand, is described as a popular messaging application for sending text and multimedia messages, making it an effective tool for teaching and learning activities (Raiman et al., 2021; Kustijono & Zuhri, 2018; Singla et al., 2020). It is especially useful for course-related discussions and facilitates communication between educators and students (Barhoumi, 2015). Similarly, Telegram, a free platform with no ads, supports document sharing and discussion groups for up to 200 students, making it a convenient tool for educational purposes (Ibrahim et al., 2016). Tencent QQ, widely used in China, is another messaging application with similar features to WhatsApp and Telegram, providing a platform for sharing multimedia and engaging in discussions (Caiwei et al., 2014).

Twitter is introduced as a microblogging site that allows students to engage in rapid interactions through short messages (Wakefield, Warren & Alsobrook, 2011). It facilitates question-asking, idea sharing, and instant feedback, which enhances learning by promoting discussions and enabling knowledge transformation (Junco, Heiberger & Loken, 2011;

Caiwei et al., 2014; Rerung, 2021). Twitter's hashtags also enables students to participate in course-related backchannel conversations (Wakefield et al., 2011; Greenhow et al., 2020).

TikTok as an educational tool, with its multimedia features, such as videos, images, text, visual effects, and songs, make it engaging for both educators and students (Duan, 2023). TikTok's live streaming capabilities are particularly emphasized as an attractive feature for interactive learning, allowing educators to host online classes, Q&A sessions, or discussions. By using visual materials, educators can capture students' attention and enhance their understanding of topics, thereby boosting enthusiasm for learning (Yélamos-Guerra et al., 2022; Duan, 2023). This is further enhanced by encouraging students to create their own videos, which fosters creativity, self-expression, and self-confidence (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021). TikTok also supports collaborative content creation, which encourages greater student interaction and collaboration (Khlaif & Salha, 2021; Duan, 2023). The interactive nature of TikTok, including comments on videos, facilitates social exchange and discussion, enhancing student engagement. Additionally, it has a broad user base that produces educational content, enabling students to access knowledge beyond traditional teaching (Susanti & Hamka, 2024). This can be seen as a valuable supplement to the curriculum, offering alternative perspectives and insights. However, there are also challenges to acknowledge by using TikTok as an educational resource. The shared content may not always be reliable, as some videos may contain inaccurate or unverified information (Escamilla-Fajardo et al., 2021; Khlaif & Salha, 2021; Yélamos-Guerra et al., 2022; Susanti & Hamka, 2024). Therefore, while TikTok can be an engaging and interactive tool for learning, it also requires careful attention to ensure the accuracy and validity of the content.

LinkedIn as an SM is primarily focused on professionalism and career development, making it a valuable tool for both students and educators. Its primary purpose is to facilitate career exploration, self-branding, and self-promotion (Manca & Ranieri, 2016; Lopez-Carril et al., 2020). For students, LinkedIn offers the opportunity to create professional profiles and build networks, which are essential for career development (Brady et al., 2010; McCorkle et al., 2012). Students can explore various business fields, interact with industry professionals through comments and posts, and join groups focused on job opportunities, discussions, and news related to their interest (Lopez-Carril et al., 2020; López-Carril, Alguacil, & Anagnostopoulos, 2022). Educators can leverage LinkedIn in their courses to enhance a variety of learning outcomes. It supports activities such as branding, market research, relationship building, and business communication (Cooper & Naatus, 2014). LinkedIn can be particularly useful for marketing courses, where educators can propose career-oriented exercises, private class groups, and debates that align with practical skills development (Purcell, 2021). The platform also promotes group interaction and networking, which fosters creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, leadership, and written communication skills (McCorkle et al., 2012; Mogaji, 2019; Lopez-Carril et al., 2020; López-Carril et al., 2022; Purcell, 2021). Through these interactions, students can develop essential skills that are highly valued in professional settings.

6. Benefits of SM Application in Education

The integration of SM in higher education has opened up new pathways for improving the learning experience, communication, and student engagement. SM tools facilitate the sharing, gathering, and transformation of information, allowing for the rapid exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experiences among students, educators, and experts. These tools provide students with a variety of formats, such as text, visuals, and multimedia content, making learning more dynamic and interactive (Lu & Chen, 2011; Khan, 2005; Li & Shiu, 2012;

Rerung, 2021). This ability to integrate diverse forms of content allows students to access information in a manner that caters to different learning styles, making education more inclusive and accessible (Caiwei et al., 2014).

One of the most notable advantages of using SM in education is the creation of effective communication channels (Istifci & Ucar, 2021). SM allows for communication that does not require physical presence, thus eliminating geographical barriers, and it also helps students and educators overcome the challenges posed by time limitations (Rodriguez, 2011; Barczyk & Duncan, 2013; Clifton et al., 2011; Martunis, 2020). This asynchronous communication model enables students to engage with the material and interact with their peers and educators at their own pace, offering flexibility that is particularly beneficial for non-traditional students or those with diverse learning schedules (Alenazi, 2017). It also allows for self-regulation and the ability to pace one's learning, which fosters a sense of autonomy in students and supports individualized learning approaches (Sener, 2010; Worthington, 2013).

Another key benefit is its role in fostering stronger relationships between students and educators. In traditional classroom settings, communication is often limited to specific hours and formats, but SM enables ongoing engagement outside the classroom, promoting closer connections (Cao & Hong, 2011; Laserna et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2018; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar & Kasem, 2018). This continuous interaction helps to break down hierarchical barriers between educators and students, fostering a more collaborative and supportive learning environment. The ease of communication through SM makes it easier for students to approach their instructors with questions, concerns, or feedback, leading to more personalized and responsive teaching.

Additionally, SM has been shown to significantly increase students' engagement and participation in learning activities (Mirabolghasemi & Lahad, 2013). Unlike the passive nature of traditional lecture-based learning, SM tools encourage active participation, where students can express their ideas, engage in discussions, and contribute to group projects. Research indicates that SM enhances student engagement by providing a more interactive and participatory environment (Laurillard, 2008; Vaeljataga & Fiedler, 2009; Isacson et al., 2011; Greenhow et al., 2020). This engagement is crucial for the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability to collaborate effectively with peers (Mogaji, 2019; Lopez-Carril et al., 2020; López-Carril et al., 2022; Purcell, 2021).

Moreover, SM has the potential to transform the manner in which communication, collaboration, and education are conducted. In the digital age, the traditional model of education is evolving, and SM tools are at the forefront of this change. By facilitating online collaboration, peer learning, and instant communication, SM creates an open learning environment where students can access a wealth of information beyond the confines of textbooks or classroom lectures (Rodriguez, 2011; Naidu, 2005; Selwyn, 2009; Tess, 2013). This transformation is evident in the way students can work together on collaborative projects, share ideas, and develop solutions to complex problems.

The application of SM also supports knowledge acquisition, enhancing the overall teaching and learning processes (Rodriguez, 2011; Mardiana, 2016; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020). By providing access to diverse sources of information, including expert opinions, educational videos, and peer discussions, SM creates a rich learning environment that promotes deeper understanding and retention of knowledge. Furthermore, it also fosters the development of critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Selwyn, 2009; Hsu & Ching, 2011; Mohamad et al., 2018).

SM also contributes to the development of students' interpersonal skills, such as leadership, communication, and teamwork (Purcell, 2021; Balevičienė, 2015; Faeza, 2019; Silva et al., 2022; Piol, 2023). By interacting with peers, educators, and professionals, students can improve these skills in a practical, real-world context (Susanti et al., 2024).

Table 2. Benefits of SM application in education

Benefits	Sources
Sharing, gathering, and transformation of information	(Khan, 2005; Lu & Chen, 2011; Li & Shiu, 2012; Caiwei et al., 2014; Rerung, 2021)
Effective communication without physical presence or time limits	(Wakefield, Warren, & Alsobrook, 2011; Barczyk, 2011; Clifton et al., 2011; Rodriguez, 2011; Leon, 2013; Tess, 2013; Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Raiman et al., 2017; Lopez & Cleary, 2018; Martunis, 2020; Singla et al., 2020; Rerung, 2021;)
Benefits of self-regulation and asynchronous learning	(Sener, 2010; Worthington, 2013; Alenazi, 2017; Laserna et al., 2018)
Closer relationships between educators and students	(Cao & Hong, 2011; Laserna et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2018; Moghavvemi, Sulaiman, Jaafar, & Kasem, 2018; Singla et al., 2020; Greenhow et al., 2020; Lenhart, 2020)
Student engagement, interaction, and participation	(Laurillard, 2008; Vaeljataga & Fiedler, 2009; Blankenship, 2011; Isacson et al., 2011; Rodriguez, 2011; Al-Sharqi, Kutbi, & Hashim, 2016; Mardiana, 2016; Shaw, Sperber & Cunningham, 2016; Oyedele et al., 2018; Greenhow et al., 2020)
Communication, collaboration, and education	(Anderson & Haddad, 2005; Naidu, 2005; Selwyn, 2009; Rodriguez, 2011; Tess, 2013; Singla et al., 2020)
Teaching and learning processes and knowledge acquisition	(Franceschi, Lee, Zanakis & Hinds, 2009; Hung & Yuen, 2010; Chan & Chan, 2011; Rodriguez, 2011; Mirabolghasemi & Lahad, 2013; Caiwei et al., 2014; Balevičienė, 2015; Mardiana, 2016; Lopez et al., 2018; Oyedele et al., 2018; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020;)
Student progress, educational outcomes, and satisfaction	(Hung & Yuen, 2010; Orús, Barlés, Belanche, Casalos, Fraj, & Gurrea, 2016; Laserna et al., 2018; Al-Qaysi et al., 2020; Rerung, 2021)
Higher student performance	(Hung & Yuen, 2010; Blankenship, 2011; Lu & Chen, 2011; Mardiana, 2016; Javaeed, Kibria, Khan, & Ghauri, 2020)
Individualized learning, motivation, and self-efficacy	(Zhang, Flammer & Yang, 2010; Wakefield, Warren, & Alsobrook, 2011; Mirabolghasemi et al., 2013; Caiwei et al., 2014; Oyedele et al., 2018)
Form of how individuals learn	(Hung & Yuen, 2010; Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Laserna et al., 2018; Moghavvemi et al., 2018)
Critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and reflection	(Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008; Selwyn, 2009; Hsu & Ching, 2011; Mohamad et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2018)
Collaborative, organizational, leadership, and interpersonal skills	(Looi, Chen, & Ng, 2010; Balevičienė, 2015; Faeza, 2019; Greenhow et al., 2020; Smith, 2021; Purcell, 2021)
Writing skills	(Fattah, 2015; Rusli et al., 2019; Haidari, Katawazai, & Yusof, 2020)
Language learning and acquiring ICT skills	(Caiwei & Norman, 2014; García-Sánchez et al., 2017; De Jager, Rwodzi, & Mpofo, 2020; Istifci & Ucar, 2021; Pratiwi, Huda, & Kurniawan, 2021; Rerung, 2021; Hue & Churchill, 2022; Yélamos-Guerra, García-Gámez, & Moreno-Ortiz, 2022)

SM has been shown to have a significant impact on improving students' writing skills, particularly through platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogging (Fattah, 2015; Rusli et al., 2019; Haidari, Katawazai & Yusof, 2020). They provide students with opportunities to write in a variety of formats, receive feedback, and revise their work in a collaborative environment. Moreover, SM supports the learning of new languages, offering students access to authentic language content, peer interactions, and practice opportunities (Razak, Saeed & Ahmad, 2013; De Jager, Rwodzi & Mpofu, 2020; Hue & Churchill, 2022; Caiwei & Norman, 2014; Xue & Churchill, 2022).

Finally, social media's role in promoting ICT skills is crucial in today's technology-driven world. By using SM, students become more proficient in navigating digital tools, enhancing their technical literacy, which is a valuable skill in almost every field (García-Sánchez et al., 2017).

Social media has increasingly become an integral tool in educational settings, offering numerous benefits that enhance both teaching and learning processes. The following table provides a comprehensive summary of these benefits analyzed above (See Table. 3).

Consequently, the findings suggest that social media can serve as a valuable tool in hospitality education, by providing interactive and engaging learning experiences, enhancing communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, in the aim to boost the development of required hospitality management skills.

7. Challenges of Application

SM in education comes with various challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their effective and ethical application. A primary concern is the potential for SM to distract users, limit physical social interactions, and even contribute to addiction (Lin, Hou, Wang & Chang, 2013; Mathews et al., 2015; Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Allam & Elvas, 2016; Figueras Maz et al., 2021; Javaeed, Kibria, Khan & Ghauri, 2020; Sunsanti et al., 2024). Additionally, data confidentiality and personal privacy are significant ethical concerns. It is crucial to maintain trust and protect personal information through rigorous ethical discussions (Liu, 2010; Skiba, 2011; Cleary et al., 2013; Manca et al., 2017; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018; Lopez et al., 2018; Manhas & Kaur, 2018; Martunis, 2020; Rasheed Hasan, 2020; Figueras Maz et al., 2021; Hysa, 2023). Another challenge is the presence of inaccurate or unreliable content, which can mislead users if the sources are not properly verified (Liu, 2010; Manca et al., 2017; Martunis, 2020; Susanti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, SM might not be ideal for discussing complex topics that require in-depth analysis or additional explanations (Hysa, 2023; Susanti et al., 2024). The quality of audiovisual materials available online is another concern, as not all content meets high standards (Duncan et al., 2013; Moghavvemi et al., 2018; Susanti et al., 2024). Educators may also face challenges in using SM effectively, as they may require formal training to navigate and use them in a morally responsible manner (Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Singla et al., 2020; Manhas & Kaur, 2018). Additionally, the increased demand for internet access in institutions and the lack of necessary technical support may hinder the widespread adoption of these platforms (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2016; Singla et al., 2020; Al-Sharqi et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2016; Martunis, 2020; Hysa, 2023). These challenges must be addressed to ensure the successful and ethical integration of SM in education.

8. Conclusions

This study has explored the potential of social media as a transformative tool in boosting hospitality management skills through applications in higher education. By synthesizing existing literature, it has identified required skills that can be developed through digital engagement, examined the effectiveness of various social media platforms in hospitality education, and assessed their role in enhancing student learning and industry preparedness. The findings underscore the growing significance of social media as an interactive and experiential learning tool, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and actual skill acquisition. SM fosters not only personal growth but also professional development, offering real-world experiences that are integral to the hospitality field. These platforms can serve as an effective tool for developing and enhancing many of the required hospitality management skills. For example, platforms like LinkedIn can foster communication and networking (Kay et al., 2000; Christou et al., 2019), allowing professionals to build connections and share information. SM can also be instrumental in promoting teamwork, as it enables group discussions and collaborations (Signe et al., 2021). By encouraging teamwork and collaborative learning, students and professionals can enhance their interpersonal skills, decision-making abilities, and problem-solving skills (Christou et al., 2019; Gevana et al., 2021). SM also aids in improving critical and creative thinking (Moscardo, 1997; Ravitz, 2014). Platforms like YouTube allow for creative video projects that foster innovation, while also enabling individuals to develop critical skills such as analyzing information, providing constructive feedback, and engaging in reflective thinking (Prashanti, 2019; Juntarangu, 2020). Additionally, emotional intelligence and professional ethics can be nurtured through engagement with various online communities and content, allowing learners to understand diverse perspectives, navigate conflicts, and build empathy (Hajibabae, Farahani, Ameri, Salehi & Hosseini, 2018; Bagon et al., 2023; Mesa, 2023). Furthermore, SM provides opportunities to practice language skills, as they offer real-time communication with a global audience (Saad et al., 2016; Christou et al., 2019; Pratiwi et al., 2021), which is particularly beneficial in hospitality, where multilingual interactions are often required. SM also allows for the development of technology and self-management skills (Ravitz, 2014; Prashanti, 2019), preparing individuals for the increasing digitalization of the industry.

Nevertheless, despite the growing prevalence of SM in teaching and learning, further research is required to fully understand its potential, limitations, and long-term impact on education (Perez et al., 2023). Challenges such as concerns around data privacy, content accuracy, and the need for proper educator training must be addressed to maximize the benefits of SM for academic purposes. Moreover, there is a need for continuous monitoring and adaptation of platforms to ensure they align with the educational goals and ethical considerations of institutions (León, 2013).

Despite these limitations, SM is continually evolving and improving, presenting opportunities for the future of educational practices. The potential for future upgrades to SM could overcome some of the current challenges, providing enhanced tools and features for both students and educators. Furthermore, the integration of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) into the educational landscape presents exciting possibilities. According to Felizarte et al. (2024) and Henry & Roman (2024), AI applications could bring about innovative changes in teaching, contributing to the development of personalized learning experiences, better data analysis, and more efficient communication. These advancements could complement SM, creating an even more dynamic and interactive learning environment that equips students with the skills required to excel in hospitality industry.

Future research should further focus on empirical investigations, longitudinal studies, and case-based analyses to validate the proposed applications and further elucidate the long-term impact of social media on hospitality management education. By doing so, the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping the competencies of future hospitality professionals can be better understood, ensuring that higher education institutions remain aligned with industry needs and technological advancements.

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